

Young Klondike

STORIES OF A GOLD SEEKER.



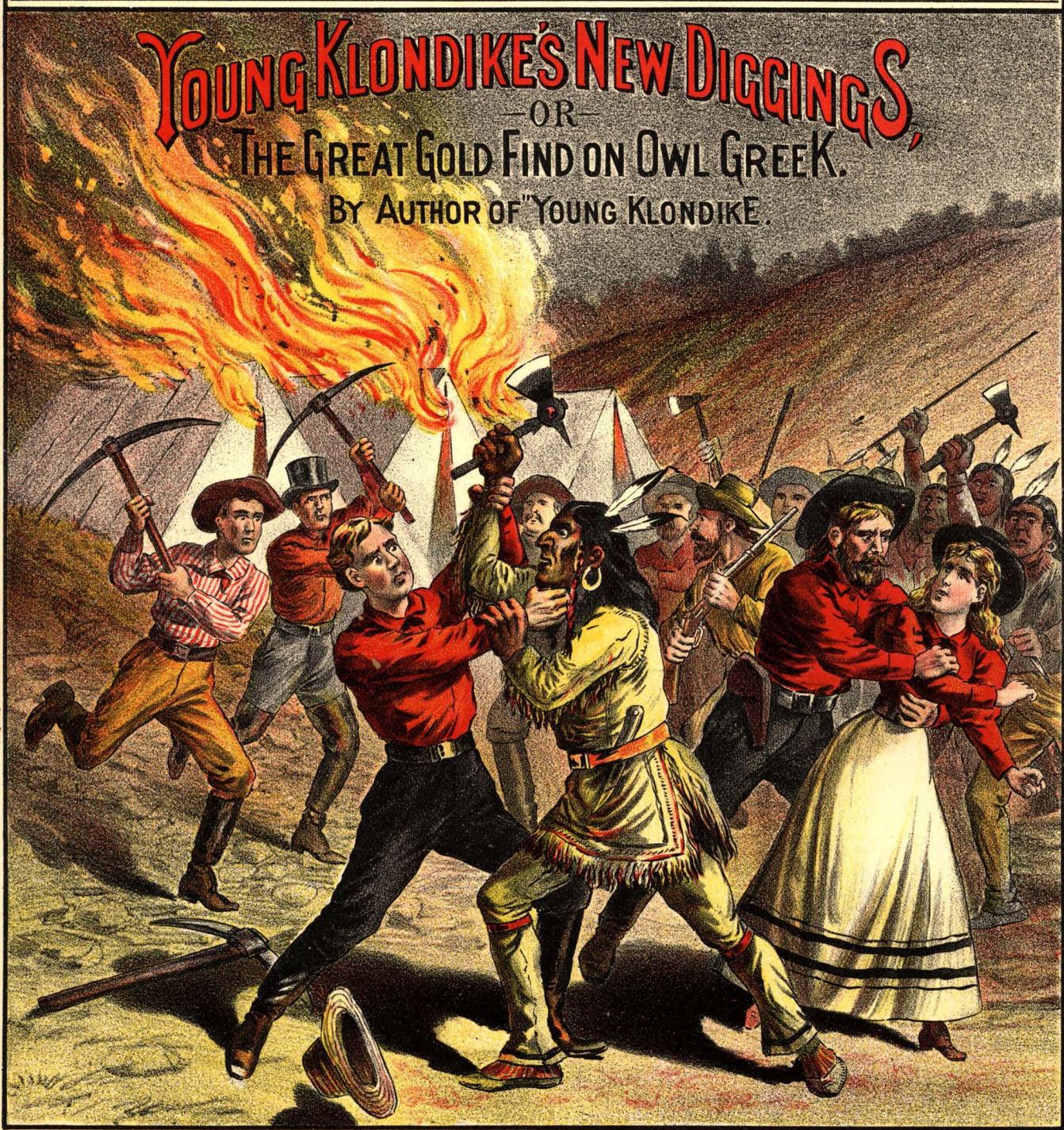
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No. 5.

NEW YORK, May 11, 1898.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG KLONDIKE'S NEW DIGGINGS, OR THE GREAT GOLD FIND ON OWL GREEK. BY AUTHOR OF "YOUNG KLONDIKE."



In front of the burning tents Big Fox and his band came rushing. The giant of the slews grappled with Young Klondike while Jake Studley seized Edith. Dick and the Unknown came rushing to the rescue with their picks upraised and ready for business.

YOUNG KLONDIKE.

♦ Stories of a Gold Seeker. ♦

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YOUNG KLONDIKE'S NEW DIGGINGS;

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CHAPTER I.

LOST IN THE TUNDRA.

A RIFLE shot rang out on the other side of the hill, and woke up the boy who was sleeping by the campfire, wrapped up like a mummy in two pairs of mission blankets.

He unwound himself as fast as he could and rubbing his eyes sleepily, stood on his feet.

"That must be Ned or Edith!" he muttered, looking around. "Both are gone—I've overslept myself. Wonder what time it is, anyhow!"

He consulted his watch and found that it was seven o'clock, but it was still dark, for this particular campfire burned among the foothills of the Indian River Mountains in the wonderful Klondike gold country.

The summer was passing away and the long days had gone with it, and the time when it would be nearly all night, and very little day was close at hand.

Another shot rang out.

Dick Luckey seized his rifle and started over the hill.

It was bright moonlight and he could see his way well enough.

Below him was a little creek, and beyond the creek the mountains were far in the distance, the intervening space being covered with rank grass, higher than the head of a tall man.

This was a tundra.

Now, a tundra is something peculiar to Alaska, and must be explained.

As soon as the winter snows melt, vegetation springs into life in Alaska with wonderful rapidity.

One who has never been in the far North can form no conception of it.

Everywhere on the level land where there is any moisture—and there is moisture everywhere, for it rains almost all the time in the summer—tall, rank

grass springs up, growing to the height of eight, ten or twelve feet according to conditions.

This is the far-famed tundra grass, and a plain so overgrown is a tundra.

It may be all a swamp, with water courses running through it, or there may be more or less solid ground in the tundra.

Some of these tundras extend for miles and miles, and to get lost in one is a very dangerous thing.

They are the resort for myriads of ducks and water fowl.

Deer is often found on the tundra and other smaller game.

Probably there is no better shooting of its kind in the known world than on these tundras, and it was this which sent Ned Golden, otherwise known as Young Klondike, and his partner, Dick Luckey, up into this unexplored region, lying at the headwaters of Bonanza Creek.

With these two boys were two others. Edith Welton, a pretty young San Francisco girl, whose life Ned Golden had saved on the voyage from Seattle to Juneau when he and his partner first came to the Klondike from New York.

Edith had been rescued from a sinking steamer, and with her friend, Mrs. Colvin, was now living at Young Klondike's claim on El Dorado Creek, where the firm of Golden & Luckey were operating a very successful gold mine and many men were employed.

The firm of Golden & Luckey was already a power in the Klondike country.

Rumor claimed that they were worth a million, and there is no doubt that in this instance rumor had it right.

Few gold seekers of the many thousands who had flocked into Alaska had met with the success of these two boys.

Besides Edith Welton, a singular genius who passed

under the name of Zed, or as he was oftener called, the Unknown, had accompanied the boys on their shooting trip.

Who the Unknown was, and why he was unknown, will be told later.

Just now we can't stop to talk any longer, for our young friend, Dick Luckey, has reached the foot of the hill, and to pass on to the tundra it will be necessary for him to cross the little creek.

"Ned! Ned!" shouted Dick. "Hey, Ned! Edith! Hello!"

A shrill whistle was heard through the high grass on the other side of the creek.

Then Dick shouted again:

"How am I to get over there? I can't get across the creek!"

"Hello! Hello, Dick! Hello!" came the answer.

"That's Ned fast enough, but I don't see how I'm to get to him," murmured Dick, when all at once he saw a pretty little naphtha launch come shooting out of one of the countless little waterways of the tundra into the creek.

Young Klondike himself was running the boat.

Edith sat in the stern with her rifle across her lap.

In the boat was the carcass of a fine black-tailed elk.

Catching sight of Dick, Edith waved her rifle and pointed to the elk.

"Great luck, Dick!" she shouted. "Has Zed come back yet?"

"Didn't he go with you?" called Dick.

"No, he didn't," shouted Ned in answer. "He disappeared during the night, Dick, and I feel awfully worried about him. The small boat has gone, too. We called and we fired; we've given him signal after signal, but we don't get any answer."

"Pshaw! That's Zed's way. He'll turn up all right fast enough," said Dick, carelessly. "Where did you get the deer?"

"It's an elk," replied Edith, "and I shot it."

"Of course you shot it! I'll bet you did! There ain't a better shot on the Klondike than you, Edith."

"Thank you! Oh, thank you!" said Edith, with mock politeness.

"And thank you for nothing," cried Ned. "I want you to understand that I'm improving, but I can't hope to come up to Edith for a long while yet, of course."

By this time the boat had reached Dick and he helped get the elk ashore.

The next thing was to skin it and carefully pack the head, for the horns were enormous.

"This goes up in our hall down at the mine," declared Ned.

Daylight next.

The ducks began to fly.

Such a quacking and screeching was never heard.

Ned and Dick brought down as many as a dozen, and went into the tundra after them, while Edith prepared breakfast.

Later they went far up the creek and shot a boat load.

The sport was so fascinating that they did not observe the passing of time.

It was in and out among the water courses, turning here and twisting there until at last they had all they could carry, and the descending sun warned them that it was time to get back to camp.

"Where's the creek?" asked Edith. "I'm all turned round, but I suppose you know, boys."

"Oh, it's right over there," answered Ned, pointing west.

Dick, who was running the naphtha engine, just then looked up at Young Klondike sharply.

There was something in Ned's way of speaking that worried Dick.

"Good Heavens! If he hasn't paid any attention to where we went, what in thunder is to be done?" he thought to himself.

Dick had been entirely absorbed in the sport.

The tundra looked all alike to him, and Dick's bump of locality was small.

"Which way shall I head, Ned?" he asked.

"Don't head at all; back out and turn to the left," was Young Klondike's confident reply.

Dick backed down to the next slew, as these waterways are called.

This turned off to the left sure enough, and the launch went spinning down the slew to its end.

Here another turned off to the right.

Young Klondike had expected a left hand turning again, but he said nothing.

"Shall we take this?" asked Dick.

"Why, we've got to," said Edith.

"Certainly," added Ned.

The question was perhaps a stupid one, for the slew they had been following ran into a swamp, where it was quite impossible to send the launch.

Practically, this right hand turning was its continuation, and they followed it.

Suddenly it widened out into a small pond.

Several slews left the pond.

"This is all right," cried Ned. "We were here before."

"Sure it's the same pond?" asked Edith.

"Why, of course. Here's where we got those black duck."

"Now, Ned, I don't want to say a word, but it seemed to me that we ought to have turned to the right that first time when we turned to the left."

"Did it, Edith?"

"It did."

"I think you are mistaken."

"Are you sure it isn't you who are mistaken?"

Ned laughed, but the laugh was only to hide his own anxiety.

He was not sure.

He was not even sure of the pond, but then Edith was not sure, either.

Night was approaching.

It is a terrible thing to be lost in tundra in this

wild region, where one might go a thousand miles and never meet a human being or see a house.

"We may as well take our chances right here as anywhere else," declared Ned. "I say we want to leave the pond by that slew over there on the right, and if it proves to be wrong, back we come and follow your plan, Edith."

So they went down the right hand slew, but it proved to be the wrong one, and worse than all, when they started to go back to the pond they missed it again and got into still another slew—they had passed several—and from that into another, until at last they became hopelessly entangled.

Darkness was now close upon them.

The fearful truth stared them in the face.

They were lost in the tundra.

Many a poor miner and trapper has met his death under similar circumstances.

It is entirely possible for one to wander through the Alaskan tundra forever, or as long as strength endures, and never find his way out.

"Ned," said Dick at last, "there's no use talking; you've got to give up."

"I've given it up a long time ago," said Ned, in despairing tones.

"I knew it," said Edith. "We are lost."

"That's what we are," said Ned; "but no matter. We can camp somewhere, and morning will come again. We can't starve with all these ducks aboard."

Nothing like being cheerful under adverse circumstances.

But Young Klondike knew, as well as he knew anything, that he was putting a bright side to the situation which had no existence, in fact.

There was no solid ground anywhere around them. It was all marsh under the tundra grass.

There was no chance to make a camp, or build a fire.

Their blankets had been left behind them, and if it turned off cold as it was very likely to do, they stood a fair chance of passing a very uncomfortable night.

"Drive her ahead, Dick!" cried Ned. "We've got to strike a few feet of solid ground somewhere, and we must make the most of what little light there is left."

Dick said nothing.

He was even more concerned than Ned.

There was more trouble at hand of which he alone knew.

The naphtha can was empty.

"I think we might as well stop right here," he said, dolefully, "the fact is—there, I thought so!"

As Dick spoke the launch stopped of its own accord.

"What in thunder is the matter?" cried Ned.

"The matter is this engine won't work without naphtha, and we haven't got a drop," said Dick.

"Then I give up!"

It was about time.

They were lost in the tundra, and without fuel to

feed the engine, the launch bid fair to remain forever in the slew.

CHAPTER II.

THE GIANT OF THE SLEWS.

"WELL," exclaimed Edith, "we are in for it now! Instead of the Unknown being the lost one here, we are lost ourselves."

"I wouldn't wonder a bit if Zed was lost, too," replied Young Klondike; "but we can't stay here. Something or other has got to be done."

"That's it!" cried Edith. "I feel safe now you begin to talk that way, Ned, for when you really make up your mind to put your shoulder to the wheel, something always is done."

Ned laughed, for it was hard to permanently down him.

"Ain't those trees over there?" he asked. "Seems to me they are, or are they only shadows?"

He pointed off over the tundra to the left.

"Trees," said Edith.

"Sure," added Dick. "Trees every time!"

"Then trees mean higher land, and high land means a place for a camp and a fire and all that sort of thing, and where the trees are is where we want to go."

Bang! Bang!

Suddenly all three were startled by the ring of a rifle sounding twice.

"Thunder! We ain't alone here!" cried Dick.

"No, it ain't thunder either. It's only a couple of rifle shots," laughed Ned. "We ain't so deep in the soup as we thought we were. I'll bet you what you like that's the Unknown—but we'll soon know."

Young Klondike seized his rifle and fired. Then waiting a moment he fired again twice.

This was a signal.

It had long since been agreed upon between our friends, the Klondikers, and this mysterious Unknown, be it understood, was one of the principal members of their little band.

"If that is Zed we'll get the answer right quick!" cried Edith.

Bang! went the distant rifle over the tundra.

Then, after a pause:

Bang! Bang!

"It's Zed!" exclaimed Dick, joyfully.

"Zed! Zed!" shouted Ned, using his closed hands as a speaking trumpet.

"H-e-l-l-o! H-e-l-l-o!" came the response, far in the distance over the high grass.

"That you, Zed?" roared Dick.

There was another hello. If any words were spoken they could not make them out.

"It's Zed sure," said Dick.

"Wish to gracious we could make him hear us!" said Ned. "He's got the boat no doubt, and we could take the launch in tow."

"There he goes again!" cried Dick, as the voice rang out over the tundra.

"Ned! Dick! Edith! Are either of you there?"
"We're all here!" roared Dick.

"Good! Good!" came the cry. "I'm lost! I've been lost since morning! I haven't the faintest idea where I am."

"So are we lost!" shouted Ned. "Have you got the boat?"

"Yes."

"Come and help us! The launch has given out."

"Where are you? I can't find you! I can't find anything! I haven't any idea where I am."

"We'll fire again and perhaps you can locate us," answered Ned. "You are coming nearer to us every moment. We couldn't hear you at all at first, but we hear you first rate now."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, then I am glad somebody hears me!" returned the mysterious voice. "I've been yelling all day and never an answer. I'm a-coming, dear boys!"

"That's the Unknown," laughed Edith. "Oh, it does seem real good to hear his voice again."

From which remark it would seem that this same Unknown was very popular among these young Klondikers.

Such was indeed the case; and yet, strange to say, neither of them knew the name of the owner of this mysterious voice.

The Unknown had been their traveling companion from Seattle, but Ned and Dick met him on one occasion in New York.

At that time he started in to arrest Ned.

Arresting people, and then immediately letting them go again, was the Unknown's weakness.

He claimed to be a detective; to have been in all parts of the world; to be then in the Klondike looking for a certain mysterious criminal, who was wanted for an equally mysterious crime.

Every time a stranger came in the Unknown's way, he would promptly pounce upon him and declare that at last he had got his man.

Then before the astonished individual had time to understand what it was all about, the Unknown would begin apologizing.

Such scenes were very ludicrous, and Young Klondike and his friends had witnessed them many times.

So it will be seen that they knew the Unknown pretty well, but they did not know his name, for he would never tell it.

All their persuasion and coaxing could not get it out of him.

To one man he would introduce himself as Green, to another, Brown, to another Black.

Then he would switch off and call himself Robinson or Jones, or Smith, or Ferguson, or "any other old thing," as the saying goes, just according to his fancy.

Altogether the Unknown was a great mystery, but the boys and Edith had grown very fond of him, for they had been through many adventures together, both strange and startling, and often found themselves in situations which called for a display of true courage.

First, last and all the time the Unknown, be his name Black, Brown or Green, had always proved himself "true blue."

It was no wonder then that our friends rejoiced at the prospect of falling in with the Unknown.

After the last call there was silence for a little while, and all listened anxiously for the sound of oars.

Nothing of the sort could be heard.

But then the thickness of the tundra might in part account for that.

"Zed! Zed!" shouted Ned at last. "Where are you, Zed? Call again."

"I'm right here, Young Klondike!" came the answer from no great distance away. Then a chuckling laugh and "call again. That's what a friend of mine who owed me a hundred dollars always said to me. Call again, and I kept on calling, until—hello! Who in thunder are you? What! What!"

Bang! Bang!

All this they heard, two quick shots being the wind up.

Then came a wild yell in the voice of the Unknown.

After that all was as still as death.

Again and again Ned shouted to know what the matter was, but no reply came.

They were greatly disturbed, and very naturally, for they did not know what to think.

"What can it mean?" gasped Edith, at last. "Something dreadful has happened to Zed. I know it must be so. Oh, if we could only do something! If we could only go on and see, but here we are tied hand and foot, and drifting further and further every moment."

It was not like Edith to give way in this fashion; but she was not alone in her feelings. The boys felt quite as much disturbed.

"I'm afraid that's the last of poor Zed," sighed Dick.

"Don't say it! I won't give up hope!" cried Ned.

"He's run against somebody, and there's been trouble, that's sure."

"Indians! We may have to fight for our own lives next," echoed Edith.

"It must mean Indians, if it means anything," said Ned. "There ain't any wild animal here on the tundra that could get the best of Zed."

"Unless it's a moose," replied Edith.

"A moose won't fight unless he's cornered. This thing came on Zed suddenly, whatever it may be."

"Hold up!" exclaimed Dick. "There's something coming down the slew!"

"Where? I don't see anything," answered Ned.

"There—look down low on the water."

"Don't see a thing. Yes I do, too. It's a boat!"

"That's what it is," said Edith. "Dear me, Ned! I'm afraid it's our boat!"

"Then Zed's a goner! This is terrible."

"We won't give up till we have to. It may not be our boat after all."

But this was hoping against hope the worst kind of way.

What other boat could it be away up there in the tundra but theirs?

This they realized only too well.

Matters began to look pretty black for the Unknown.

Lighter than the launch, the boat drifted faster.

It was slowly but surely overtaking them.

Ned and Dick caught hold of the tough tundra grass, stopped the launch and allowed it to come up.

The boat was empty.

The oars lay along the seats.

The Unknown was gone, and so was his rifle, but there was proof of his having been there.

A plug hat, old, battered and rusty.

Everyone who knew the Unknown, knew his plug hat.

He never wore anything else.

In season and out, winter and summer, the Unknown stuck to his plug.

Edith and the boys were terribly overcome.

"He's dead!" cried the girl, tears coming into her eyes. "Poor Zed!"

"Don't be sure," said Dick, consolingly. "Zed is hard to kill."

"But the hat!"

"I don't give up hope," put in Ned; "but we must act at once. Hold on here, Dick, while I make the launch fast astern. We'll get into the boat, you and I, and give Edith a tow up the slew. If the Unknown is still in the land of the living we'll find him out."

There was nothing more said.

No one felt like talking.

Meanwhile, night had settled down upon them. The Arctic stars were out in all their autumnal glory, but the moon was yet to rise.

Deep shadows were thrown by the tall tundra grass as they pulled along the slew.

Ned and Dick kept to their oars leaving Edith to look out ahead, for her eyes were sharp and her aim the truest of the true.

Anything Edith aimed at was pretty sure to get hit, but this time she missed it—her rifle flew to her shoulder and was fired before they had gone three hundred yards.

"Stop! Stop!" she called. "I didn't hit him! Oh, look out for yourselves, boys! There! There he is again!"

Needless to say that Ned and Dick had their eyes behind them by this time.

What they saw was an immense man, fully seven feet tall, peering out from the tundra.

"Great heavens!" gasped Ned, "it's the giant of the slews!"

CHAPTER III.

A CANOE LOAD OF GOLD.

BANG!

Edith fired again.

Satisfied that she had solved the mystery of the

Unknown's cry, she let fly for the second time at the giant of the slews.

Again Edith went back on her record.

A wild unearthly laugh rang out through the tundra and the big man vanished.

Did we mention that he was an Indian, dressed in the heavy fur robes which the Coppermine tribe usually wear?

If not, we state it now, and may add that a fiercer or more forbidding looking savage was never seen.

"Lay low! Lay low!" breathed Ned. "He's got a rifle! It'll be his turn next. I know all about that man."

They dropped low in the boat fully expecting a shot, but it did not come.

The Coppermine Indians are the worst in Alaska, where as a rule the redmen are decidedly friendly to the whites.

"See anything more of him, Edith?" called Ned, after a little.

They were all peering over the edge of the launch and boat, trying to get a sight at the red giant, but he declined to appear.

At last they got tired of waiting and straightened up.

"I can't stand it so," declared Edith. "I believe he's gone for good."

It looked so.

They waited, watched and listened, but saw nothing of the big Indian.

"He's done for poor Zed," said Edith, bitterly. "Don't say anything more about my shooting, boys, when I missed a mark like that and two good shots to try it in, too."

"Let's pull ahead," said Dick. "It must have been pretty close in here that Zed was when he first called."

The slew made the usual windings in through the tundra.

Ned, who had been paying particular attention to this, felt sure that they must be somewhere near the place from which the detective's voice came.

Not that he expected to find him.

Ned had given up all hope of seeing the Unknown again when all at once they heard a faint cry proceeding from the tundra on the left.

"Boys! Boys! Don't pass me by! I'm here!"

It was not possible to keep back the shout.

Indian or no Indian out it came.

"Where are you, Zed?" called Dick.

"Here—here in the swamp holding on for dear life. Can't you see me! Right here!"

They saw him then!

Up to his neck in mud, too.

There was the Unknown just inside the grass line, holding on to the tough roots of the tundra with both hands.

"I'm most gone," he said, with his chuckling laugh. "Wouldn't have been necessary to have my name for the coffin plate to bury me in this grave, Edith. Mighty near being the last of poor old Zed."

But it was not the last of the jolly little detective by a good deal.

With no little difficulty the boys helped him to climb into the boat.

He was plastered with mud from head to foot, and presented altogether a most despairing appearance, but he was alive and not seriously wounded.

"Blame that big buck!" he cried. "Just as I was holding that interesting conversation with you over the tundra telephone, out he springs and knocks me over the head with a club. Next I knew he was dragging me out of the boat and then I went down in the mud. He got my rifle and made off. Ye gods and little fishes, Edith! I hope you shot him. I heard your pop-gun go twice."

"I fired at him, but he got off!" said Edith.

"Did you shoot to kill?"

"I aimed to hit him."

"Don't believe it. If you had you'd have done it. Oh, I'm so glad to be with you all again. I've had an awful time."

Then the Unknown told it all over again, and explained how he came to lose himself in the tundra.

"That giant was the first human being I've seen since I left the camp," he wound up by saying. "Just let me get sight of him again once, only once! That's all I ask!"

"Oh, you wouldn't hurt him, Zed," laughed Dick. "You'd get out of the way like chain lightning. I'm sure I hope none of us will ever lay eyes upon him again."

"Wouldn't! Just give me the chance, that's all. Look at me! Ain't I a sight to behold! But I don't care so long as I'm with you again."

"What in the world was the Indian standing on all the time he was working over you?" asked Ned, who had been looking curiously around.

"Blest if I know! I've been thinking about that."

"Of course he didn't stand in the mud."

"Hummocks," suggested Edith.

"It's pretty dark in there, but I can't see any hummocks," said Ned.

"He's like the turtle which held up the elephant which was supposed in ancient times to hold up the world," laughed Dick.

"That turtle stood in the mud if I remember right," chuckled the detective, "and I tell you again my giant didn't stand in the mud. I'm sure of it, but I'll be blamed if I know where he did stand."

"Where was the place?" Ned asked. "Do you know that?"

"Right here. I didn't move ten feet after I tumbled in."

"Drive the boat in among the grass a bit, Dick. I'm going to solve this mystery or bust," said Ned.

It was solved quicker than either thought for.

The first pull on the boat drove it right through the clump of grass.

Behind it was another slew and alongside on the right ran a firm bank with a beaten path.

The bunch of tundra completely choked up the

mouth of this slew, so that one not aware of its existence might easily have passed it unobserved.

"There's where your Indian stood!" cried Ned, "and see, the path runs down toward the place where we saw him."

"That's what it does," said Dick. "He must have retreated this way when Edith scared him off."

They determined to land and examine the path further.

At all events, a fire could be built here and the Unknown get a chance to dry himself, and all hands be made comfortable for the night.

As they were making the landing, Edith suddenly remembered a remark made by Ned, which had puzzled her not a little.

"Ned, you called that Indian the giant of the slews; do you know anything about him?" was what she asked.

"Yes, indeed, I do."

"What?"

"Heard of him in Dawson, last time I was down."

"I'm just dying to know what you know of him," put in Dick.

"I'll tell it around the camp fire," declared Ned; "Giant or no giant, we've got to go into camp right here. If we don't, Zed may have to tell us his name to put on his coffin plate, for if he was to take pneumonia and die, of course we couldn't bury him in the slew."

"Don't you fret about me," laughed the Unknown. "I ain't booked for Kingdom Come yet awhile, not by a long chalk, and this ain't the night when you are going to find out my name."

"When is the night?" asked Dick.

"I'll give you a week's notice when it's to be, Dick, so you may be on hand."

"All right! I'll be there, too," laughed Ned; "meantime, what do you say about going into camp here, Zed? We want your opinion before we decide."

"I'd be awfully glad of the chance to dry myself, dear boy."

"And the risk of an attack by Indians?"

"Is no greater here than anywhere else. If we push on up this hidden slew there's no telling what we may strike. We might run right into them."

"Settled," declared Ned. "We stay right here."

Preparations for the camp were then begun.

The dead tundra grass was gathered and a fire built.

It was not the kind of fire that anything could be cooked by. It would be necessary to go supperless with plenty of fine ducks in the launch, which made it seem all the more aggravating.

The Unknown built a little fire of his own further along the path, and removed his clothes, wrung the water out of them and dried them the best he could.

No alarm came.

Later, all gathered around the big fire and prepared to make themselves comfortable for the night.

"Now is the time to tell us about the giant, Young Klondike," suggested the Unknown.

"That's what we want to hear," chimed in Dick. "Tell us all you know, Ned."

"Why, it's this way," said Ned. "When I was down in Dawson City last time I saw that Indian walking along the street. There was a big crowd following him, and, of course, I was curious to know who he was. As soon as I began asking people I found that what I didn't know everybody else did. It seems that this Indian is called 'the giant of the slews,' on account of his immense size. He belongs to a branch of the Coppermine tribe which lives away up here at the head of the tundra, and every once in a while he appears in Dawson bringing big nuggets with him, which he sells or swaps off for provisions. I was told that a year ago he would sell the nuggets for almost any price, from a drink of fire-water up, but he's sharper now, and will only let them go to the regular Exchange offices, though they swindle him horribly, of course."

"You may be very sure they do," said the Unknown. "Where does he get the nuggets, do you know?"

"That's the point. It's something nobody knows, for he won't tell."

"I've heard something myself of this mysterious Indian who brings big nuggets down from the tundra," said the Unknown; "but as I did not hear it said that he was a giant, I never thought of connecting him with this man."

"I believe it's the same fellow," said Ned. "It's my opinion that he was more afraid of us than we were of him. What he don't want is for us to find out where he gets his nuggets."

"Which is just what we do want to find out," said Dick.

"It would be a great thing if we could. We've done splendidly with our claims on El Dorado Creek, and our old claims up the Klondike having been sold out for a good price, we are in just the shape to tackle new diggings wherever we can find them. If we could jump in on a tract of unclaimed land up here in the Indian country, we'd have everything our own way."

They talked it over for a long time and then began to think of sleep.

No alarm had come yet, nor did any come during the night.

Ned, Dick and the Unknown took turns watching, and Edith was allowed to sleep the night through undisturbed, making her bed in the launch, while the boys and the Unknown took what comfort they could in the boat, the one whose watch it was pacing the path.

Dick took it first and the Unknown second and Ned came last.

Consequently it was Ned who saw the sun rise over the tundra, and a glorious sight it was.

He was still watching the big fiery ball piercing its way through the clouds, when all at once his attention was attracted by an Indian canoe lying against the path at a considerable distance further along the slew.

Everything was perfectly quiet, and there seemed no prospect of danger, so Ned ventured to go on to the canoe and have a look.

As he drew near, he saw that it was piled high with tundra grass and he began to fear an ambush, for it is quite a common trick of the Coppermine Indians to hide themselves under the grass this way and then suddenly spring out upon the unwary white man, whose curiosity leads him into the trap.

He therefore approached the canoe very cautiously and held his rifle ready.

The grass was not suddenly flung up, as he half feared it might be.

It completely filled the canoe, and if there was an Indian under it, he must be either dead or asleep, Ned thought.

For several moments he stood watching the grass to give his hidden enemy a chance to show himself, if he was there.

There was no movement under the grass. Not a sound was to be heard save the chirping of the autumn insects among the tundra.

"I guess it's all right," thought Ned. "That canoe will come handy, anyhow. Wonder what the Indians loaded the grass into it for? I may as well see."

He laid down his rifle and began pulling out the grass and throwing it into the slew.

All at once he sprang up with a loud shout.

It took a good deal to surprise Young Klondike, but he was surprised now.

The bottom of the canoe was covered with golden nuggets as big as hens' eggs.

"Great Scott!" cried Ned. "I'm right in it with both feet; I've stumbled on the giant's gold!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIGHT FOR THE GIANT'S GOLD.

THERE was a small fortune right there in the canoe.

With gold at seventeen dollars per ounce, the ruling price at Dawson City, Ned saw that there must be several thousand dollars lying there at his feet.

"It's ours if we don't find any other owner for it," he said. "I suppose it belongs to the giant, though."

Before going back to awaken his companions and tell the news, Ned took a good look around.

He saw that they were at no great distance from the end of the tundra.

The clump of trees which they had seen at dusk the night before was no wooded island in the tundra, but on solid ground at the foot of the mountain, which appeared to be not more than two or three miles away.

Remember, one can see for great distances over the tundra. Two miles is as nothing.

A light seen thirty or forty miles looks but a comparatively short distance away.

"That's the other end of the tundra," thought Ned, "and I don't know but what we might as well go for it. We might wander among the slews a month and never find our way out, but once we strike

the tree line we can easily follow it down to Bonanza Creek. It may take a little time to get there, but we are sure to get back to our camp in the end."

He felt immensely relieved at this discovery, and so did everyone else when he woke them up.

"Hello, Young Klondike! What are you routing a fellow out so early for?" growled the Unknown when Ned shook him up. "I was just getting in my fine licks and here you come shaking me up. Ye gods and little fishes! What do you mean by it? Say?"

"What do I mean by it? Why I mean business—big business!" laughed Ned.

"You've struck something rich, Ned!" exclaimed Edith, stepping out of the launch. "You can't deceive me by saying you haven't. I know it by the way you speak."

"That's right," said Dick. "Out with it, Ned. Have you struck new diggings right here in the slews?"

"That's what I have!" said Ned, "and don't you forget it."

"Come now! Come now!" cried the Unknown. "Gold nuggets don't grow in swamps, dear boy."

"Don't they?" replied Ned triumphantly. "Just you come and see."

He led the way on along the path to the canoe.

"Nuggets! Nuggets! By the Jumping Jeremiah, nuggets in the swamp!" the Unknown shouted out.

Dick and Edith were equally excited.

Of course, there was a lot of discussion as to how the canoe came to be there.

"It's the giant's gold, that's what it is," declared Ned.

"Then, with all due respect to his nibs, the giant, I move we keep it," declared the Unknown.

Ned then called attention to his tree line discovery.

All agreed with him that their way lay in that direction.

"We've got to go, for we want breakfast, and we can't get breakfast until we can find something beside this infernal tundra grass to build a fire with," the Unknown declared.

This decision meant an immediate start.

They hurried back to the launch.

Edith took her place in the launch with the Unknown.

Ned and Dick took to the boat, and each pulling an oar, they were soon up with the canoe, which was made fast behind the launch, and then the real start began.

It was good, hard pulling, for the canoe was decidedly a heavy load to drag.

Roughing it on the Klondike had toughened the boys through, and made their muscles as strong as iron; they could have managed a good deal heavier load, if that load had been solid gold.

"If we can only find out where the giant got these nuggets, that's all I ask for," remarked Ned.

"Would you locate a new claim there, Ned?" replied Dick.

"As quick as a wink."

"Still, we are doing pretty well where we are, and it might mean a lot of trouble to start new diggings away up here."

"There's hard work in anything, Dick."

"Of course. I ain't kicking at the prospect of hard work, but this place is nine miles from nowhere. Suppose we were to strike a rich claim, how in the world are we to get the gold down to Dawson? That's what's bothering me."

"You needn't fret on that score, either. Good diggings so far have been discovered only on the line of the creeks, and all the creeks on this side of the mountains run into Bonanza. I figure it out that these nuggets came from some creek which comes out of the mountains, and when we find it I'll bet you what you like you'll find that it empties into Bonanza Creek."

"There's the end of your Indian trail, boys!" called Edith, who was as usual, keeping a good lookout ahead. "At least, so far as this slew is concerned."

The break lay right ahead of them.

There the little ridge of solid ground seemed to turn into the tundra.

Beyond lay a cross slew and beyond that the tundra began again, but there was no path; nothing but swamp, which seemed to extend in one unbroken stretch over to the tree line.

"We'll keep right on along this slew," shouted Ned. "We want to get to the foot of the mountains as soon as ever we can."

They passed the break and kept on up the slew.

All at once there came a wild shout from behind.

"Hola! Hola! Hola!"

"Look! Look! The giant!" exclaimed Dick.

"Heavens! And half a dozen Indians with him!" gasped Ned.

"Trouble's beginning again?" echoed the Unknown. "The fellow what steals what isn't his'n, is pretty sure to get to prison. Go back into the mud-hole where you came from, you red snoozers! We have no use for you!"

The giant and several other Indians had suddenly come out of the tundra upon the path close to the break.

"Hola! Hola!" they shouted, shaking their hands wildly, and pointing to the canoe.

The Unknown shook his fist at them in return, and the boat shot round a bend in the slew.

"Look out for shots, Edith!" cried Ned.

"Tip 'em one, Edith!" shouted the Unknown.

"No," said Edith. "They ain't armed, and I don't mean to fire at them. After all, it's a shame to steal their canoe."

"Didn't s'pose you would—that's why I asked," said the Unknown. "All's fair in war, though, and we take what we want where we can find it. I only wish I could tip 'em a shot with any chance of the bullet reaching its destination."

"Hola! Hola! Hola!" came the cry again, and then all at once a rifle cracked.

The bullet came whizzing through the tundra, passing within an inch or so of the Unknown's head.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah! that bullet came near reaching its destination then!" cried the Unknown.

"Yes, and it didn't come from the giant and his crowd either!" exclaimed Edith. "That shot came from on ahead!"

"Look out for yourselves, boys!" shouted the Unknown.

Another shot came from the unseen enemy as he spoke.

It was getting dangerous.

Young Klondike and his friends were perfectly willing to fight for the giant's gold, if they could find out who there was to fight with.

Now a third shot.

Still no damage done.

Nevertheless it was very alarming.

If there had been any chance to get "in out of the rain," so to speak, they would have been only too glad to do it, but there seemed to be nothing for it but to keep straight on and take chances so.

The shots evidently came from the tundra on the left.

Probably they were approaching another of those hidden slews, Ned thought.

"By gracious, Dick, there's someone hiding in there, and it ain't Indians, either! Thunder! There it goes again!"

Another crack—another shot flew past them—this time it passed between Ned and Dick.

All this time they could hear the Indians yelling in the distance; it appeared to be perfectly evident that the shots did not come from them.

"Edith!" called Ned, "can you do nothing to help us? Your eyes are usually sharp enough to see through a stone wall."

"A stone wall is one thing and a grass wall is another," replied Edith, who held her eyes fixed upon the tundra, and her rifle ready for instant use, "but I'm on the watch all the same.

"Shall we keep on?" asked Ned.

"Yes, do. Pull for all you are worth."

"We may run right into an ambush."

"Do as you like then, Ned. I know we are all in danger, but—ah!"

Suddenly Edith stopped speaking and leveled her rifle at the tundra.

Had the fight for the giant's gold begun?

Evidently it had.

Edith saw something in the tundra.

Breathlessly the boys waited.

The Unknown scarcely dared to speak for fear of disturbing her sight.

Suddenly Edith fired twice straight into the tundra.

A sharp cry rang out.

"Thunder and guns! The canoe is sinking!" they heard someone yell.

"Shoot again. Bring down Young Klondike if you can," shouted another voice.

"Down Ned! Down!" cried Dick and the Unknown in a single breath.

Ned ducked down.

It is horrible to have someone aiming at you whom you cannot see.

Instantly a shot went singing past Dick's ear.

It would have been the last of Young Klondike then if his head had been there.

At the same moment Edith's rifle spoke again.

A yell of despair rose from the tundra.

"I put a hole through their bottom that time!" cried Edith.

"Ye gods and little fishes, I can't see any boat at all," the Unknown called out.

Again the cry came from the tundra.

"Jam your handkerchief in the hole, Jake! We've got to look sharp, or we'll go under. Pitch the boy overboard. That's the talk! Now, then, scoot!"

A wild yell in a boyish voice was heard mingling with this shout.

Then there was a splash—then the sound of a paddle working rapidly in the water.

The battle for the giant's gold had been fought and won, and thus far no one had been able to locate the enemy but Edith herself.

CHAPTER V.

LITTLE BIG FOX.

"EDITH! What in thunder have you done? Where are they? What are they? Speak, or by the Jumping Jeremiah, I'll bust!"

The Unknown was evidently getting excited, or he would not have burst out like that.

"Pull, boys! Pull!" cried Edith. "Pull into the grass. There's someone drowning there, and he's got to be saved!"

Loud cries in a boyish voice were ringing out from among the grass.

Ned and Dick had already turned their boat, and were pulling in among the tundra as best they could.

Although no one but Edith had as yet been able to see anything, all knew well enough that these could not be any part of the Indian crowd who had gathered at the end of the path.

They had been seen distinctly enough, and there was no white man among them.

"Help me! Help me! Sabe me!" the boy's voice cried again.

Then suddenly the boat shot out into another of those hidden water courses.

It was a wonderful thing, this tundra.

Whichever way you turned there were the slews.

Down this slew a small Indian canoe was being paddled by two white men with all possible speed, and right alongside of where the boat came, Ned and Dick saw a little Indian of not more than twelve years of age clinging to the tundra and screaming for help.

Ned caught him by the hair just as he was sinking, and pulled him into the boat.

The boy was gasping like a fish out of water.

He sank down in the bottom of the boat and kissed

Ned's feet, muttering something which the boys couldn't understand.

"What's he say?" asked the Unknown.

"You tell me and I'll tell you," answered Ned. "Edith, you're a bigger wonder than ever! How in the world did you manage to catch sight of that canoe through the grass?"

"Oh, I saw it," said Edith, triumphantly. "If you had done as much duck shooting on the tule lands of California as I have done, Ned, your eyes would be as sharp as mine are. I saw it and I shot for it, and I reckon I put more than one hole through the bottom, too."

"I'll bet you did!" chuckled the Unknown; "but who are those people? That's what I can't make out?"

"Prospectors," said Dick.

"A couple of Dawson City land sharks—that's what I think," said Ned, very decidedly. "I'd like to bet big money they are just that and nothing else."

"Shouldn't wonder a bit," said the Unknown. "They know you all right, Young Klondike, and don't you forget it."

"That's what makes me think it. Evidently they were watching us."

"And could see us through the grass better than we could see them," added Dick.

"Easily accounted for," replied Ned; "they were looking toward the sun, but we were looking into the shadows. No shadows too deep for Edith's eyes, though. It's a mercy some of us weren't killed."

"Shall we pull back into our other slew now?" asked Edith. "They are pretty well out of sight, and it wouldn't pay us at all to chase them, even if we wanted to, which, of course, we don't."

"I say yes," replied Ned. "We want to make for the timber, and as I'm as hungry as a wolf, we can't get there any too soon."

The pull to the timber consumed about three-quarters of an hour and was performed without incident.

Meanwhile, the little Indian boy lay perfectly still in the bottom of the boat, looking like some animal in his fox-skin coat and breeches.

Whenever Ned spoke to him he would mutter something unintelligible and kiss his feet again.

Sometimes he varied the monotony by kissing Dick's feet.

Thus matters stood when they came to the end of the tundra, and to their intense relief saw a broad stretch of sparsely wooded land before them, extending back to the foot hills of the Indian river range of mountains which rose from the plains a few miles away.

The spot was entirely wild.

A sparkling stream ran down into the slew and near it were several big boulders in the midst of a grove of fir trees.

It was just the place for a camp, and it was with a sigh of relief that they pulled boat, launch and canoe up on the shore.

It took all the strength Ned and the Unknown could muster to get the latter up on the bank.

The Indian boy stood watching them curiously.

His little black eyes glittered as they rested on the gold.

"Breakfast! Breakfast!" cried the Unknown. "I could eat stones, I'm so hungry."

"If you'll build me a fire I'll give you ducks to eat in very short order," laughed Edith; "by the time you get the wood blazing I'll have a brace picked and ready for roasting. I don't think you can ask for any better breakfast than roast duck."

To be sure they couldn't. Nobody wanted anything better, and preparations for the fire instantly began.

"Don't let that boy get away. If you do we'll have the whole tribe of Coppermines down upon us," declared the Unknown.

Ned made signs to the boy to stand near the boat.

"Me no go," said the little Indian, developing a better knowledge of English than they had expected. "You good to me, boss. You sabe Little Big Fox! Me stay!"

"Good enough! See that you do," answered Ned. "Is your name Little Big Fox, bub?"

"Dat my name."

"You speak good English?"

"Me work in camp. Me know English. Good man! Little Big Fox lub you."

He dropped down and was going to kiss Ned's feet again.

"Come, come!" laughed Young Klondike drawing away. "You mustn't do that. Stay with us, Little Big Fox, and we'll give you some roast duck."

"Me like duck!" said the boy gravely. "Me stay."

They let him alone after that, and preparations for breakfast went on.

The boy hovered about lending a hand.

When Ned tried to start the fire and it wouldn't burn he pushed him gently aside, and laying the wood differently asked for a match and had the fire going in no time.

Then he went to Edith who was picking a duck, and took it right out of her hands and began picking off the feathers himself.

In short, Little Big Fox installed himself as cook without being asked, and as he seemed to understand his business they let him go right ahead.

As soon as the ducks were prepared, Little Big Fox cut two forked sticks and drove them into the ground—on either side of the fire.

Then he cut a long, sharp stick, and drove it through the ducks, and laying it over the forked sticks began twirling the ducks round and round.

The Unknown watched him gravely.

"Come, Edith, you ain't in it as a duck cook with him," he laughed; "you may as well give up."

"Oh, I'm willing," said Edith. "I only wish we had some coffee and bread. It makes me sick to think of all the good things there are waiting for us back at the camp."

But these thoughts were all useless, and the good things were soon forgotten, for the ducks proved excellent eating, and the clear, sparkling water of the stream answered the place of coffee fairly well.

Little Big Fox came in for his share, and while they ate, the Unknown turned to and tried to question him.

He met with no success whatever.

The Indian boy would only answer with a grunt.

"Confound him! Won't he talk to me?" cried the Unknown. "What are detectives for if not to find out things? Ned, you'll have to tackle him, my boy."

"I guess I can manage him all right," replied Ned. "Look here, Little Big Fox—where do you live when you are at home?"

The Indian boy immediately pointed off toward the mountains.

He seemed to understand Ned well enough.

"Me lib up dere," he answered—"high up."

"Your father live there?"

"Me fader dead."

"Your mother?"

"Me mudder dead."

"Hello! An Injun orphan," chuckled the Unknown.

Little Big Fox gave him a contemptuous look and never said a word.

"How did you come to be with those men?" asked Ned.

"Dey bring me up from camp. French Gulch," answered the boy.

"Hello! They are French Gulchers, are they? A hard crowd. What did they want up here?"

"Dey come find yellow stones like dose," said Little Big Fox, pointing at the canoe.

"Find any?"

"No."

"You know where there are yellow stones like those, Little Big Fox?"

"Oh, yes! Me know where dey plenty," replied the Indian boy.

Here was important information.

Dick, Edith and the Unknown drew near.

"Where is that?" asked Ned, motioning to them to keep quiet.

"Up dere in mountain."

"You can take me to the place?"

"Yes, boss. Dose yellow stones come from dere."

"Who brought them from there?"

"Big Fox."

"Your father?"

"No, no! Me fader dead. Me uncle, Big Fox. He bring dose yellow stones."

"Big Indian! So big?" cried Ned, holding his hand high above his head.

"Yes, dat him. Heap big man, Big Fox," replied the boy, nodding violently.

"It's the giant," said Dick.

"That's who he is; as sure as fate we've struck the giant's nephew!" cried the Unknown.

"It's just what we want," said Ned. "Now, Little Big Fox, do you know me?"

"Yes; me know you! You Young Klondike. You heap good man."

"You ever go to my place on El Dorado Creek?"

"Oh, yes. Me go your place. Me see you; you no see me."

"You take me to the place where the yellow stones grow and you shall come and live with me at my place on El Dorado Creek, Little Big Fox. How would you like that?"

It was only necessary to look in the boy's eyes to see how pleased he was.

"Oh, me like it! Me like it much!" he exclaimed.

"Me take Young Klondike to place where heap yellow stones grow."

"How far?" asked Ned.

"No much far. No heap mile. Ten mile—twenty mile—no more."

"Would you risk it?" asked Ned, looking round at his friends.

"I'm in favor of it," said Dick. "What we want is a new diggings. This promises to be the place."

"I say yes, if we only had our things," said Edith. "Those we must have before we can think of going into the mountains."

"And you, Zed?" said Ned. "We want to hear from you."

"Why, it's a risk," said the Unknown, "and it means a fight with the Coppermine Indians sure."

"I guess we are good for that."

"You bet we are!" cried Dick. "I ain't going to let the fear of a fight turn us off if there's a good strike ahead."

"Let's go," said the detective. "We're in and we may as well be hung for an old sheep as a lamb."

Little Big Fox stood listening.

Whether he understood or not it was hard to tell.

"Wait," said Ned. "We do want our things, and do you know I believe we can get them."

"We are miles away from the camp," said the Unknown. "If we go back there we can never find this place again."

"We've got to find the camp first," replied Ned, "and I believe we can do it. Little Big Fox will help us. You see."

Ned patted the little Indian on the shoulder. The boy smiled and showed his glittering teeth, but said nothing, keeping his eyes fixed on Ned.

"How in thunder are you going to make him understand?" demanded the Unknown. "I've dealt with Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Irishmen, Italians, Spaniards and every other kind in my time, and never had any trouble in getting along with any of them, but Injuns ain't in my line."

"Leave him to me," said Ned, and he took a sharp stick and drew a plan of the slews in the sand.

He marked out the line of Bonanza Creek and showed where they entered the tundra and where the camp was, and then indicated about where he supposed they

were, and in a few well chosen words he made Little Big Fox understand what it all meant.

"You take us back there, Little Big Fox?" he asked, pointing to the location of the camp.

"Yes, yes!" nodded the boy. "No far—right over dere!"

He pointed in exactly the opposite direction from where Ned supposed the camp to be.

"Nonsense!" said the Unknown.

"It can't be so," said Dick.

"But I believe him," said Ned. "We are completely turned around. Don't you remember we could see hills from the camp, and a stretch of timber? I believe this is the very place. How far, Little Big Fox?"

"Two mile," replied the boy promptly. "We go quick in boat."

"Suppose I try it and leave the rest of you here?" proposed Ned.

There was a general outcry of opposition against that.

"We'll all go together," said the Unknown, but we'll bury the gold first and leave the launch behind us. If we can ever get back here I shall be surprised."

"What will you bet?" asked Ned.

"Dollars to doughnuts against it," chuckled the Unknown.

"I'll bet you the first nugget I find at the new diggings against the first one you find that Little Big Fox takes us straight to the camp."

"Done," said the Unknown, and he lost his bet.

The gold was carefully buried in an out of the way place back among the trees.

Then Little Big Fox took the canoe and our Klondikers followed in the boat.

The Indian boy paddled his canoe in and out among the slews, turning here and twisting there, until Ned felt sure it was all a mistake ever having trusted him; then all at once Little Big Fox gave a shout and took his last turn.

"Dere camp!" he cried.

"Hooray for Little Big Fox!" shouted Ned, for there, sure enough, was the camp right ahead of them.

In less than half an hour the Indian boy had taken them back to the point from which they had started out.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UNKNOWN MAKES A BIG FIND AND WISHES HE HADN'T.

EVERYTHING was just as Young Klondike and his party had left it at the camp.

All their provisions and their mining tools and the three tents, which they intended to make use of in case they struck new diggings and had to remain any length of time away from the camp on El Dorado Creek, were there undisturbed.

This was proof positive that neither the Indians nor the prospectors had been there in their absence.

"We'll go right straight back," said Ned. "I'll bet on Little Big Fox every time now."

"Confound the little Fox!" growled the Unknown. "He's done me all right! If I make a big find I'm not in it, but you are."

"Next time don't you be so positive," laughed Ned. "What's your loss is my gain."

They lost no time loading their belongings into the boat and the canoe.

Then they started back to the timber.

Ned had taken particular note of the way, and would have been able to have returned without the assistance of the little Indian guide.

In less than an hour from the time they started from the timber they were back again.

"Dere! Vat I tell you? Me do it!" said Little Big Fox, triumphantly. "Me know every place in slews, in mountains, in tundra. Now me take Young Klondike boss place, where he find heap yellow stones."

"That's just what we want," said Ned. "Good boy, Little Big Fox! How do we go?"

"Go in boat to Owl Creek," was the answer.

Little Big Fox seemed to be able to talk good English when he had a mind to. Ned was satisfied that he understood almost everything that was said.

Apparently no one had been in the timber grove during their absense.

Fears of the Indians seemed to be fading away.

It was determined to abandon the launch for the present and leave the gold undisturbed.

Ned and Dick went in the canoe with Little Big Fox, Edith and the Unknown followed in the boat with the supplies.

The little Indian was full of enthusiasm.

He seemed to feel under immense obligations to Ned, and to be determined to make those obligations good.

"Indians no find," he kept saying. "Big Fox heap bad man, but he no know where yellow stones grow. Me know. Me show Young Klondike, boss. He get heap yellow stones."

"That's what we want, Little Big Fox," Ned would answer, and he promised the boy a rifle, a new suit of clothes "all same white man" if the yellow stones were found.

So they kept on along the slew for miles until they came to a point where it joined with a broad, deep creek, which came directly out of a deep gorge in the hills.

"Dis Owl Creek," declared Little Big Fox. "We go dis way."

"Just the place for a big find," remarked Ned, looking at the creek.

"That's what it is," answered Dick. "If there ain't gold up that creek there's none anywhere in the Klondike country."

"We don't need anybody to tell us about Klondike gold," laughed Ned; "but up here it is different, and we've got to find out for ourselves. What's Zed hollering about? There he goes again."

"Hey! Hello! Hello, there, Young Klondike!"

the Unknown was calling—his boat had dropped a considerable distance behind.

"Hello!" cried Ned.

"Is this your creek?"

"That's what Little Big Fox says."

"Know where that runs to? Where it empties into Bonanza, I mean?"

"Does it empty into Bonanza at all?"

"Of course, it does! You can see by the way it's heading. That's the same old Owl! It's our Owl Creek."

"What, not the one that enters Bonanza as you turn into the Klondike by Barney McGraw's place?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where we found the nine golden nuggets in the cave," called Edith. "You must remember that, Ned."

Now, Young Klondike remembered the incident perfectly well, and he recalled that the creek in question bore the same name as this.

Could it really be the same?

It was possible.

The Owl Creek which the Unknown referred to came down out of the mountains, passing through a tract of country but little explored.

Ned had heard many stories of the richness of this region.

Indeed, it was rumored that most of the golden nuggets which the Coppermine Indians were for years in the habit of bringing down from the interior to Fort Cudahy, Fort Selkirk and other settlements came from this very region.

This was very encouraging.

It looked as though they might be on the eve of a big find.

"How far up Owl Creek is the place where the yellow stones grow, Little Big Fox?" asked Ned.

The Indian boy counted off his fingers.

"One—two—tree—four mile," he said.

"We can make it before dark," exclaimed Edith.

"Of course we can," said the Unknown, "and I say we'd better try for it. Then we can go into camp and make a fresh start in the morning."

"Whoever thought of stopping?" cried Ned. "Not I, you bet, nor Dick, either. Paddle on, Little Big Fox. We are going up Owl Creek."

They were soon beyond the level stretch of timber land, and the canoe and boat entered a deep gorge.

On either side the rocks towered far above their heads.

The stream itself was full of big bowlders and loose stones.

They were passing among dangerous shallows, where great care was needed to keep the boats from grounding.

Little Big Fox was quite equal to the occasion.

He steered around the rocks, and in and out among the shallows.

"We must be right in the mountains now," said Dick.

Their range of vision was extremely limited on account of the rocky walls of the canyon.

These came right down to the water's edge.

To have scaled them would have been impossible. There was no shore. A cat could not have walked at the edge of the cliffs without stepping in the water.

If the descent had been more abrupt than it was this canyon would have been a most dangerous place, but the fall was very gradual, and they had no difficulty in making their way up the creek.

"How much further through these rocks?" Ned asked Little Big Fox.

"No much," replied the boy. "No talk! Look up on rock. Mebbe Indian! Hark! Look dere!"

He suddenly pointed up to the top of the cliffs at a point a little distance ahead on the left.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah! My man!" the Unknown suddenly cried.

There on the rocks stood an Indian holding a rifle.

He wore a skin coat and two eagle's feathers were in his hair. He was looking down at our Klondikers, but he made no move.

"Is your man an Indian, Zed?" asked Edith quietly. Ned took out his glass and leveled it at the top of the rock.

"My Indian man is an Indian sure," chuckled the Unknown. "This is a bad job, Edith. I'm under the impression that it would be a very good thing to shoot that man."

"No, no, no! No shoot!" cried Little Big Fox. "He go away, mebbe. You shoot, heap more come."

"He's right," said Ned. "Don't think of shooting him, Edith, unless he attacks."

"I ain't thinking of it," said Edith. "You know that, Ned."

"There he goes," said Dick, as the Indian suddenly vanished.

"Quick! Now we get by!" exclaimed Little Big Fox, and he began paddling all he knew.

They were soon past the point where the Indian had stood.

Of course, Young Klondike kept his eyes fixed on the top of the rocks.

Most devoutly he hoped that there was to be no more Indians, but he was doomed to disappointment.

All at once six braves came into view.

"Hola! Hola!" they shouted, and began waving their hands violently.

"You know them, Little Big Fox?" demanded Ned.

"No, no!" grunted the boy, paddling for all he was worth.

Suddenly one of the Indians fired down upon the canoe.

The ball fell short of the canoe, but it struck the water pretty close to the boat.

"Let 'em have it, Edith! let 'em have it!" cried the Unknown.

"No! No! No!" exclaimed Little Big Fox most earnestly. "We safe now! No follow! Big hole. All right."

They saw what he meant in a moment, for then they came suddenly to the end of the cliffs.

The mountains were still far in the distance.

They had passed through the foothills, though.

A long stretch of broken land lay between the cliffs and the beginning of the range.

This land formed a great natural basin.

It was just the spot to hope for gold.

Washed down from the mountain veins it was sure to settle in this hollow.

Young Klondike gave a shout of triumph.

"This must be the place!" he cried. "If there ain't gold here there's none anywhere. How is this, Little Big Fox? How much further do we have to go?"

"No much furder," was the answer. "Indian no go furder. No can come down widout go many mile."

This was easily understood.

The cliffs ended abruptly. Here the descent was a good five hundred feet, and the rocks were as steep as the side of a house.

The Indians seeing that they were out of range did not attempt to fire again.

They ran to the edge of the cliffs and stood there watching the gold hunters.

The one who had fired called out something in his own language.

Little Big Fox put his hand alongside his mouth and shouted back an answer.

Then he threw back his head and laughed long and loud.

"What does he say?" asked Ned.

"He say him come and drive out Young Klondike boss, but he no can do."

"Sure?" asked Dick.

"Sure, boss, see?"

He pointed off at a little rocky mound just ahead.

"What's he mean?" demanded the Unknown.

"Let him alone, we'll soon know," said Ned, and sure enough they did, for when they came to the mound they saw that a branch creek forced its way between the rocks.

There was a narrow path just wide enough for the boats to enter, and when they were through that, they came into another and smaller basin.

On each side the rocks rose abruptly to the height of about a hundred feet.

The only entrance to this basin was by the way they had come.

For in the distance they could see the stream issuing from a cave in the mountain side.

"A natural fortress!" cried the Unknown. "Young Klondike, you and Edith could hold this place against fifty men."

"Dis de place! Dis where yellow stones grow!" said Little Big Fox, bringing the canoe up against the bank.

They had reached their journey's end at last.

What fortune awaited them—good or bad?

They were not to know until the sun rose next day, for it was now almost dark, and there was no time to be lost in getting their tents up and making the camp comfortable for the night.

As before Little Big Fox went right to work.

The boy was really a wonder. He seemed to be handy at anything he undertook to do.

He would not allow either Ned or Dick to raise a finger, but he seemed to be perfectly willing to have the Unknown work, and between them they soon had the tents in place.

Then Little Big Fox built a fire, and more ducks were roasted and coffee was made.

A quiet evening followed.

It was agreed that one should remain on guard at the mouth of the pass constantly.

There was no other safe way, knowing what they knew about the Indians.

Little Big Fox was very earnest about it and wanted to go on guard himself, but Ned saw that the poor boy was greatly fatigued, and he made him lie down and take first sleep.

Then they built a fire down near the pass, and as the Unknown paced up and down with his rifle, Ned got out his banjo and began playing, and Edith sang, and the Unknown, as he walked, would break in with his marvelous stories of adventure.

Altogether they spent a very jolly evening, and at eight o'clock Edith retired to her tent, and Ned and Dick to theirs, the Unknown keeping guard till midnight, when he woke up Ned and took his turn in the tent.

Ned stood guard till four o'clock, and then Dick took his place and was still doing duty when morning dawned, and all hands turned out refreshed and ready for the work of the day.

"Now, then, Little Big Fox, for the yellow stones!" cried Ned, soon after breakfast.

"All right, me show Young Klondike boss!" replied the Indian boy, and he led the way up the stream.

Every now and then he would stop and point down into the water.

Evidently, Little Big Fox understood what was required of him.

In each instance Ned was able to see small nuggets in the stream, but they were not of sufficient importance to be worth getting, and, moreover, Little Big Fox kept hurrying them on.

At last he came to a place where a hole seemed to have been recently dug alongside the stream, and hastily filled up again with earth and loose stones.

That the work was quite recent was plainly shown, for the earth in the hole was not frozen as it is everywhere else in the region if you go down any depth.

"Dat de place," said the boy. "Dat where yellow stones grow."

"Bully for you, Little Big Fox!" cried the Unknown.

"Get in and do some digging," said Edith. "I'm

just dying to know whether there is gold down there or not."

"Ready!" exclaimed the Unknown, jumping down into the hole.

"What have you struck, Ned?" shouted Dick, who now was watching them from the pass.

"Nothing yet!" called Ned, "but it looks all right. We're going to make a try for it now."

"Plenty yellow stones dere," persisted the boy. "Young Klondike boss he dig, he find."

Ned followed the Unknown down into the hole.

No pick was needed, so both took spades and went to work.

The stones and earth were thrown out in a hurry.

There seemed to be a good lot of this rubbish, and after ten minutes' hard work there was no trace of gold.

Then all at once the Unknown made a dive down and lifted up an enormous nugget with both hands.

It was so heavy he could scarcely lift it.

Although covered with earth the gold could be seen shining out on all sides.

"Hooray! I'm right in it! I'm rich!" roared the Unknown.

"Not on your life!" laughed Ned, seizing hold of the nugget, "that's mine. Remember your bet, Zed."

"Oh, ye gods and little fishes! What a fool a man is to ever bet!" cried the Unknown. "I've found the biggest nugget on record and I wish I hadn't. If you'd only found it, Young Klondike, it would be mine."

CHAPTER VII.

HARD AT WORK ON THE NEW DIGGINGS.

"No quarreling over the find!" cried Edith, laughingly. "We want to see if there's any more yellow stones like that down there."

"Heap more! Heap more! Me tell true!" cried Little Big Fox, and down he went into the hole and began pulling over the earth with his hands.

"I vote that we present Edith with the nugget," said Ned.

"Agreed to!" cried the Unknown, "and that settles it! Edith, there's your nugget. It's worth eight thousand dollars, if it's worth a cent!"

He tossed it up out of the hole at Edith's feet.

"That's the sort of present I like to get," laughed Edith. "Oh, don't I wish I had this in San Francisco! I know just the house I'd like to buy!"

"You'll be able to buy a whole block of houses before we get through here, I'm thinking," said Ned. "It's just as Little Big Fox says—this hole is chuck full of nuggets, large and small."

It was really wonderful.

Every turn of the spade now brought to light more nuggets.

Ned shouted for Dick to come up and see, taking the chances of a sudden attack.

Before he could get there they had thrown out quite a little heap of nuggets.

But there were still hundreds of others in sight. . . They seemed to have made no impression whatever on the supply in the hole.

"This is a regular bonanza!" cried Young Klondike.

"It's the richest pocket on record, that's what it is," said the Unknown. "I knew we might expect something of this sort here. I felt dead sure of it. The formation of the land is just right."

And the Unknown was just right, too.
Such pockets are very unusual.

In fact, we may say that nothing equal to the one discovered by Young Klondike and his friends away up there on Owl Creek had ever been known before, and it is very doubtful if anything to match it will be discovered again in a hurry.

Still, similar finds, although less valuable have been made in California and in other parts of the world, particularly in the famous Transvaal diggings in South Africa.

In the Klondike country the gold does not, as a rule, occur in pockets, but lies in the gravel deposit some twenty feet below the surface, in the form of small nuggets and coarse flakes.

All this Young Klondike knew perfectly well, for his experience had, by this time, been quite extensive.

He was, therefore, able to realize what a great stroke of good luck had befallen them.

It was, in fact, the luck of a lifetime, but they were far from other mining camps, and dangers and difficulties were likely to beset them.

The difficulty in being able to successfully work the new diggings was sure to be great.

But trouble did not come as soon as Ned anticipated might be the case.

No Indians appeared that day nor the next. Caution was relaxed.

Although they were on the alert there was no constant guard kept at the pass as there should have been.

There was too much work to be done at the prospect hole.

The first day saw the end of the pocket, for many hands make easy work, and when one is scooping out gold by the hatful one don't think much about stopping to rest.

According to Ned's estimate something like eighty thousand dollars was taken out of the pocket that first day.

This brought them to the end of the nuggets in sight, and the question was what to do next.

There was flake gold in the creek—plenty of it—but when one has been dealing with nuggets flakes are at a discount—at least, Young Klondike and his friends felt that way.

"We'd better go down a little way in the hole and find out what we've got to deal with," declared Ned, next morning, and that was the programme for the day.

They had now struck the frozen ground and a fire had to be built to thaw it out.

This was allowed to burn several hours.

Little Big Fox continued to work in the same satisfactory manner. It was he who brought the wood and kept the fire going.

Meanwhile, Ned and Dick went to work on a trench designed to connect the prospect hole with the creek.

This was intended to serve a double purpose.

First, it would drain the shaft, and again, if the pocket extended that way they were pretty sure to strike more nuggets.

Fortune favored them again.

They ran right into another nest of nuggets in the trench.

It was Dick Luckey's luck to make the rich find this time.

It proved to be a continuation of the deposit in the hole and it extended clear to the edge of the creek.

This led Ned to suspect that there might be more on the other side of the hole as well, and after he and Dick had satisfied themselves that there was a small fortune in sight they marked out a trench leading away from the creek to the distance of some twenty feet.

Over this they built their fire and left it to do its work thawing out the ground.

By this time the first fire had burned itself out.

The ashes and rubbish were quickly removed, and Dick and Ned started in to explore the bottom.

"Where's the Unknown?" asked Dick. "Ain't he going to help us? Haven't seen him in an hour now. It seems to me it's about time he did a little work."

Ned laughed.

"You can't keep him working at pick and shovel," he said; "it's no use trying, figure it how you like. He just won't do it, that's all!"

"I'd like to know where he is, just the same. Somebody ought to keep an eye on the pass. Edith and Little Big Fox have gone down Owl Creek hunting, and we might be surprised here in the hole easy enough."

"Go and see if you can find him," said Ned. "I'll keep on working till you get back."

Dick was gone twenty minutes.

"Can't find hide nor hair of him," he reported on his return.

"He's gone off on one of his mysterious absences, I suppose," said Ned.

"That's what!"

"He oughtn't to have done it without letting us know."

"Of course he oughtn't. But that's Zed all over, and what are you going to do about it?"

"Can't do anything about it, and take it as it comes."

"Well, let's hope there won't be any need of a guard. Any luck?"

"Not a bit so far. I'm working in a lot of black muck now."

"When we get the trench down to the level of the shaft it will drain it off for us, and make it easier working. Perhaps we'd better leave it as it is until that is done."

"Now, I'm determined to find out what lies below here," said Ned, giving his spade another dig. "If we don't find some color pretty sudden, though, I'll be willing to give it up and strike in somewhere else. Hello! What's this?"

"Gold!" cried Dick, jumping down into the hole, for he had caught the yellow sheen of a nugget through the muck.

"That's what it is," said Ned, turning it over. "It's another pocket, Dick, just as sure as fate!"

And so it was.

In a few moments the boys had shoveled out the black dirt and exposed another nest of nuggets below it.

How deep the deposit ran it was impossible to say, but the amount of gold in sight was enough to turn the heads of any two young men on earth.

Dick threw up his hat and caught it as it came down.

"Hooray for our side!" he shouted. "We are in for another million as sure as fate!"

"It looks so! It certainly looks so," replied Ned; "but we'll turn these nuggets over first, and make sure how deep the deposit runs."

The pick-axes were now brought into play, and the next ten minutes decided the momentous question.

The result was something of a disappointment.

This deposit proved to be exceedingly shallow.

"Not much here," said Ned. "Well, no matter. We've got enough of it, anyhow. If the other trench proves to be in the line of the pocket, too, our fortune is made without this."

"How much do you suppose there is in sight here, shallow as the deposit is?" asked Dick.

"Oh, I should say twenty thousand dollars, for a guess."

"Yes, and more."

"I don't think you'll find it so."

"I do, then. I'll bet on it."

"Don't; remember Zed's fate. Come on, now; the fire over our new trench must be pretty well burned down. Let's see what we have got there."

An hour's hard work followed.

The trench had to be dug down to the level of the bottom of the prospect hole, before they could hope to make any discovery.

This was about ten feet.

The usual depth at which gold is discovered in the Klondike country is from eighteen to twenty feet.

In rare instances the gravel that carries the gold, which is supposed to underlie the top soil in one vast sheet, is raised higher than this. It runs in waves, so to speak, like drifting snow.

Should a prospector be fortunate enough to sink a shaft over the top of one of these waves, he would strike the pay dirt deposit comparatively near the surface.

On the other hand, should he sink over the lowest point of the wave he would have to go down the full depth of twenty odd feet, or perhaps even more.

Striking the pay dirt does not by any means assure a find of gold.

The pay dirt may prove barren, or only give a "color," that is, show a few flakes of gold.

Hundreds of abandoned prospect holes are scattered all over the Klondike country.

These as a rule have been sunk to the pay dirt and nothing worth washing discovered.

Young Klondike had sunk several such on his El Dorado Creek claim, but as a rule fortune had treated him more generously.

In this instance it had been most generous, for not only had he caught the top of the wave, but had struck a deposit of fabulous richness beside.

Knowing all this from experience, Ned and Dick worked away with pick and shovel tossing the dirt out of the trench without making even a pretense of examining it.

But as they drew near the line of the bottom of the shaft they became more particular, and each shovel full was carefully scanned.

Suddenly they struck the gravel at a little lower level than the bottom of the shaft hole.

"Here we are," cried Ned. "Look, Dick, we are on the slope; it runs this way; that's why we struck it higher on the side of the creek."

"I see," replied Dick. "The creek has cut right through the gravel; the top of the wave must have been somewhere about the middle of the creek line, I should say."

"That's what," replied Ned, "and that means a big lot of gold washed down the creek ages ago."

"It's well to know that. We'll have to do some exploring along the creek later."

"The best chance is on the line we are working, say fifty or a hundred feet away from here. If we can find the bottom of this cradle that will be where we shall strike it rich."

The spaces between the gravel waves are sometimes termed cradles.

Such diggings were eagerly sought for in California in the days of '49, but there the conditions were different again, the gold being exceedingly fine and nuggets rare.

Perhaps it was for this reason that it was usually found in the greatest quantities on top of the underlying clay deposit or "hard pan," as it is called, or, in cases where no "hard pan" existed, on top of the "bed rock," which underlies the soil all over the globe.

Hence the terms working down to hard pan, or bed rock, which have come into common use, signifying to have reached the bottom of things.

Having now reached "pay dirt" the next thing to ascertain was whether or no it would really pay, for as yet there was no sign of gold in the bottom of the trench.

The dirt which now came out of the hole was piled in a place by itself, and a digging of three feet more made.

"If the nuggets are here, they have taken a dip," said Ned.

By this he meant that the gold deposit had sunk to the lower level of the gravel.

In a case like this it might be necessary to go to bed rock. Certainly it would be foolish to abandon work until bed rock was reached.

The day was now advancing.

The Unknown was still missing. Edith and Little Big Fox had not returned.

"We ought to go and look for them," declared Dick. "I should think Zed might have stayed around this one day, but there's no use talking. He's like the wind. He goes and comes just as he pleases."

"Oh, don't let's bother our heads about them now," said Ned. "It always comes out all right, and it will this time I'm sure. We'll put in another hour and then quit, whether we strike anything or not."

Dick agreed and they went to work again.

It was a lucky move—perhaps the luckiest thing the boys had done since they came to the Klondike.

In less than ten minutes they struck the pay streak.

No panning was necessary to show them what they had in the trench.

Dick's pick-ax turned up a whole nest of nuggets.

"We've hit it again! By gracious, we've hit it again!" cried Ned, in wild enthusiasm.

And so they had.

The nugget deposit of the shaft hole extended over into the trench, dipping slightly.

It passed on out of the trench line both right and left.

Hundreds of small nuggets were thrown up on the heap.

The deposit was unquestionably one of amazing richness.

The boys worked down into it for a little while, and then Ned tossed his spade out of the hole.

"That's enough, Dick!" he exclaimed. "We've got all we can possibly carry away and more, too. The new diggings are a huge success."

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. JAKE STUDLEY WALKS IN.

"WHAT are we going to do about it?" asked Dick, as he followed Young Klondike up out of the trench.

"We are going to work it," replied Ned. "We'll run it for a few months, more or less, according as it pans out, shine off the cream, and then cut it up into claims and sell out, keeping the best for ourselves, of course."

"You don't suppose it is possible that it can have been already located, Ned?"

"I'm very sure it hasn't. There has been no locating of any consequence done up in this region."

"But suppose we find that it has?"

"Why, then, we've got to do the square thing. We'll look up the owner, make our report, account for all the gold we've taken out, and buy the claim if we can, or jump it under the law if there's a chance."

Now there is nothing dishonest in "jumping" a claim in the way which Ned intended.

The mining laws of both Canada and the United States allow this.

Any man may locate a claim on unowned land.

He stakes out the amount of land he proposes to take possession of, draws a diagram of it, and files it with the claim recorder.

If the land has not been previously located, it then becomes his under certain conditions.

He is obliged to begin work on it within a certain time; to do just so much work in a given period, etc. This is called the "assessment work."

If it is done the locator is protected in his claim.

If it is not done any man may jump the claim; that is, do the work and notify the recorder.

The original locator may still redeem his claim under certain conditions, which must make the jumper whole in any expense he has been at.

If no notice is taken of the jumper within a certain length of time, the claim then becomes his property, providing he continues to comply with the requirements of the law.

It is well to know these things, hence, we dwell upon them.

Young Klondike was well posted in all these matters.

He perfectly understood the mere finding of gold in these new diggings did not make them his own.

The boys now started down the basin and went through the pass to Owl Creek to look for Edith and the Unknown.

They had come just in time.

At some little distance up the creek they could see the canoe coming down toward them.

Edith was in it.

She waved her hand, and guiding the boat with the paddle, allowed it to drift down the stream.

"Thunder! Where's Little Big Fox?" cried Ned. "I don't see anything of him."

"By Jove! I don't like that," said Dick. "It looks bad. Something has gone wrong sure."

He leveled his glass at Edith's face.

If the girl felt disturbed she did not show it; but, then, Edith was always calm, even under the most trying circumstances, and it was not easy to judge how she felt by merely looking at her face.

"Where's the boy, Edith?" called Ned, when she came in hearing.

"Gone!" answered Edith. "Ned, he's deserted. At least, I'm afraid so."

"Thunder! That means trouble ahead," cried Dick.

"I don't believe he's deserted," replied Ned, positively. "I won't believe it till I hear what Edith has got to say."

"Any luck?" he called out.

"A few ducks, that's all," answered Edith. "There was a flock of them making for the slews and I took them on the wing. I saw a deer and fired at it, but I missed."

"I don't believe you missed!" called Ned. "Maybe your shot didn't kill, but I'll bet that deer has something to remember you by."

Edith made no reply to this flattering remark upon her shooting, but called out to know what luck the boys had met with in the prospect hole.

"Elegant!" answered Ned. "We struck the richest kind of digging."

"Nuggets?" asked Edith.

"Nuggets till you can't rest and flake gold too. Oh, it's all there, Edith. You just want to come and see."

By this time Edith had brought the canoe up to the landing. She threw the ducks ashore, and handing Dick her rifle jumped out.

"Yes, Little Big Fox has gone," she declared. "We went up the creek about four miles to a little pond. It was there I saw the deer, and just as I fired at him Little Big Fox started away on the run. He went like lightning. I shouted after him and called to him to come back, but he didn't pay the slightest attention to me, just ran on in among the hills and I saw no more of him."

"Strange!" mused Ned. "I can't believe yet that he meant to run away."

"That's what I thought," said Edith, "and I waited around ever so long for him, but he didn't show up, and at last I had to give it up and start back. If I had waited any longer I'd have been caught in the dark. But how is this you are alone, boys! Where's Zed?"

"I'll be blest if I know," answered Ned. "We left him down at the camp, and next thing we knew he wasn't there."

"Is the boat gone, too?"

"No."

"His rifle?"

"Didn't look for it. I've no doubt it is."

"He's off on one of his tours. I reckon he'll be back soon. We'd better get supper, anyhow."

They returned to the camp.

Ned and Dick now built a fire and helped prepare the ducks.

By the time they were ready for roasting it was almost dark, and still the Unknown had not returned.

Now, if the boys had been as cautious as they should have been, they would have known that this was just the time when the pass should have been guarded.

But the security they had been enjoying made them careless, and neither gave the matter a thought until all at once Edith gave a low exclamation and pointed toward the pass.

"Look there!" she whispered. "Look there!"

A rough looking man, dressed in a red shirt and wearing a heavy beard, was just coming through the pass.

He carried a rifle in his hand and advanced slowly, keeping his eyes fixed on the party around the fire.

Ned and Dick were on their feet in an instant, and ran for their rifles.

"Hello!" shouted the man. "Say, pard, you don't want to do no shootin'. I'm a friend, I am."

"Who are you?" called Ned, as they hurried to meet him. "What do you want here?"

"Waal, I kinder reckon I wanter see a feller what passes by the name of Young Klondike. Do you know any such a man?"

"I'm Young Klondike—that's what they call me."

"Waal, then, pard, you're the very feller I wanter see. My name is Jake Studley. I belong up French Gulch way."

"The man I shot at in the slews!" called Edith, warningly. "His name was Jake!"

Ned heard her, although the stranger could not possibly have done so, and the words threw him on the alert at once.

"You don't advance any further, unless you lay down that rifle, Mr. Studley!" he called out.

"Come now! Come now! What's the matter with me?" replied the stranger, sneeringly. "I reckon I'm as straight as they make 'em. Don't think there's any flies on me. If there is I don't know nothing about 'em."

"Drop the rifle!" cried Ned, sternly.

His own went up to his shoulder then, Dick and Edith following his example.

Jake Studley halted and stood looking at them in silence for a few moments.

"You seem to mean business, you three," he said. "I reckon it would be more healthy for me to lay this yere rifle down."

"I reckon it would," replied Ned, grimly, "and what's more, you want to be quick about it or this may go off."

Jake Studley threw his rifle on the ground.

"You might as well put yourn down too," he said. "That would be doing about the square thing."

"We'll keep 'em," said Ned. "You can come on now, Mr. Studley, and say what you've got to say, but I want you to understand we are not stuck on strangers here."

"Just so," growled the man; "waal, there hain't no harm in me. I just want to notify you to get off this claim. It belongs to me and my partners. I seen you digging here a while ago, so I just thought as heow I'd let yer know that you was working on another man's ground."

"That's all very easy to say," replied Ned, "but of course, you haven't come here without your proofs?"

"I located this claim a year ago, young feller. That's my proof."

"So you say."

"So I mean."

"It's easy to say it. We want to know more."

"Yer do, hey? Then just inquire down to Dawson; it's all writ down thar in the big books."

"When did you locate it?"

"More'n a year ago."

"Very well; if the claim is yours, we'll settle with you all right. What have you done on it already? How about the assessment work?"

"Waal, I ain't done nothing but sink two or three prospect holes. I reckon that covers the assessment work all right."

"When did you do it?"

"I tell yer about a year ago."

"We haven't seen any such hole."

"What—what! Weren't you working in it?"

"The hole we were working in was sunk less than a year ago."

"I say it wasn't!"

Mr. Jake Studley's tone was growing very offensive.

Edith whispered to Ned to be on his guard.

"That's all right, neighbor," called Young Klondike. "We don't want to hear any more. To-morrow we start for Dawson. If you are the owner of this claim we shan't interfere with you."

"Is it all right?" growled Studley. "How about the gold you've dug? Where do I come in on that?"

"You'll get all that belongs to you."

"That gold belongs to me, Young Klondike."

"If it does you shall have every ounce of it."

"I want to be guaranteed that."

"You'll get no other guarantee than my word. That ought to be good enough for you."

"It ain't, all the same."

"Then make the most of it. I'm done talking now."

"Yes, but I ain't. I don't want nothing but what's right. You fellers attacked me on the slews. I don't like to be shot at."

"So it was you we fired at, was it?"

"Well, it was!"

"Who tried to drown that little Indian boy! Who _____"

"Stop!" cried Edith, suddenly, flinging up her rifle. "Draw that revolver, Jake Studley, and you are a dead man!"

Studley's hand had wandered toward his side pocket.

It was a lucky thing that Edith's sharp eyes saw the movement, or there might have been trouble.

"Who's a drawing?" growled the tough—three rifles were covering him now.

"Skip! Travel on! Get out of this!" cried Ned. Studley glared and then moved backwards.

"You'll hear from me again, Young Klondike!" he snarled.

Suddenly seizing his rifle he took to his heels, and ran off through the pass.

"After him!" cried Dick. "We want to see where he goes to—we want to know if he is alone!"

But by the time they reached the end of the pass Studley had vanished.

They could see no boat on the creek besides the canoe, and were at a loss to know where the man could have gone.

"Look out for yourselves! You'll get a shot next!" said a voice from behind the rocks.

Up went the rifles again.

They thought it was Studley, but instead of that out stepped the Unknown.

"By gracious, Zed, at last!" Dick exclaimed.

"That's what's the matter!" chuckled the Unknown. "By the Jumping Jeremiah! I've just missed my man again."

CHAPTER IX.

THE ATTACK ON THE CAMP.

If ever Young Klondike and his friends were glad to see any one, it was the Unknown then.

"Did you see him?" cried Ned. "Which way did he go?"

"My man?"

"Bother your man! I mean Jake Studley!"

"I'm not acquainted with Mr. Jake Studley. I was out looking for my man, but didn't get him. Just as I was turning into the pass here, I saw a man turning out. As he happened to have a gun that was probably loaded I dodged in behind the rocks, for my rifle happened to be empty, and I didn't care to run the risk of picking up a stray shot."

"That was Jake Studley. Which way did he go?" asked Ned.

"He went right up over the rocks like a billy goat," drawled the Unknown. "Of course, now, I'd have liked to have shot him, but I'd let off my last cartridge firing at Indians, and so there you are."

"Indians!"

"Yes, Young Klondike, Indians. They are all around us. We'll talk it over, but first of all let's get back inside the pass and take our boats with us, for as sure as my name ain't Jay Gould, we're going to have trouble before morning dawns."

This was serious.

Odd and sometimes obscure in his way of speaking the Unknown certainly was, and yet Ned knew him well enough to understand that his queer speeches always had a meaning.

"You've found out something, Zed. What is it?" he demanded. "Tell it now."

"No, sir! I don't tell anything till those boats are safe inside the pass, unless you want to pull out of here at once under cover of darkness, but I don't say that's a safe thing to do, for there's a band of toughs and Coppermine Indians waiting for us at the mouth of the canyon. It's my honest belief that we could never pass through there alive."

Here was startling news.

"If that's straight then we've got to stay where we are," cried Dick.

"You may gamble on its being straight," replied the Unknown. "You can just bet your sweet life I ain't the sort of fellow to give it to you any other way, boys."

"We'll stand our ground!" cried Ned. "Get the boats up first of all, as Zed says; then he can tell us all he knows."

"Right you are! Nothing like having soldiers who obey promptly," chuckled the Unknown. "To the

boats! Where's Little Big Fox, Edith? Has he gone?"

"Yes, he has," said Edith.

"I suppose! I knew he would turn traitor. He's the spy who has given us away."

"I don't believe it!" persisted Ned.

"You would, then, if you had seen him with his big foxy uncle as I did up the creek."

"Up the creek! I thought you said down the creek?" exclaimed Edith.

"My dear, there's one band up the creek and there's another band down the creek. When I got through spying out the land down the creek I went up the creek; so there you are!"

"I was up the creek myself," said Edith, and she told the story of Little Big Fox's disappearance.

"Just as I thought," said the Unknown. "The boy is a spy. He led us into this hole for the purpose of betraying us. Of course, your friend, Jake Studley, had no objection to you doing a little work on the claim and developing that a bit. After you had done it, then he was ready to make a move. He came here and tried to bulldoze you. Bulldozing wouldn't work, so he skipped out. Next thing will be an attack."

"They'll find that we can do some fighting as well as themselves, then," said Ned, "but you say you fired at these Indians. How was that?"

"Why, the how of it was that they saw me and fired at me," replied the Unknown. "The fact is, they had me in a corner and I had to defend myself, so I just let fly every blame shot in my rifle and that sent them flying, and then I flew out of my corner and here I am."

"Was this down the creek?"

"No, up."

"Kill any of them?"

"I reckon not. I didn't see any of them go down, though, but I went down—down the creek! I ran like blazes. In fact, I may say that I never ran so fast before."

By this time they had reached the boats.

The Unknown picked up the birch bark canoe, and walked off with it without any help.

Ned and Dick, with Edith's help, had all they could do to drag the boat up to the pass.

They left it on the ground just inside the rocks, and there waited for the detective to come back, he having gone further along with the canoe.

"It's stand guard now!" cried the Unknown, as he approached. "Bring me my supper when you get it ready, Edith. I'm good for two hours here, after that I want to go to sleep."

But the two hours passed and no alarm came.

After supper all hands remained at the pass for a long time. The danger seemed to have been averted.

Gradually they became used to the situation, and although the Unknown went over his story with more detail, and was very positive about his statements, Ned began to hope that it was a false alarm, and there was going to be no attack after all.

At the end of two hours he went on guard himself,

the others turning in under the tents. Midnight came and still no alarm.

Dick was to have been called then, but Ned gave him another hour.

When he finally woke him at one o'clock he was able to report all quiet still.

It certainly looked very much as though there was to be no attack that night, and it had still more of that appearance when Dick called Ned at six o'clock.

"Any news, Dick?" Ned asked, as he sprang to his feet and stepped outside the tent.

"Not a thing," replied Dick. "It has been as quiet as the grave. I don't believe the Indians mean to bother us after all."

"I hope to gracious they don't. We'll light out of here to-day. When we come back we'll bring force enough with us to hold the fort against the whole Coppermine tribe."

"We'd better get breakfast right away, boys," called Edith from her tent. "I'll soon have it ready and will stand guard while you eat it; then we'll load right up, and make a start."

"You won't make a start till I've been down the creek to see how the land lies at the foot of the canyon. That's settled right here," called the Unknown, as he came crawling out from under his tent.

Half the success of Young Klondike's party was due to the fact that each one tried to help the other, and each one was more than willing to do his part.

As a preliminary precaution Ned and Dick both went down to the bank of the creek, but nothing was to be seen of the enemy.

The Unknown joined them after a moment.

Breakfast was a small matter to the detective when there was work to do.

"Are you off?" demanded Ned.

"Yes, right now."

"Don't be gone long, Zed."

"Not a minute longer than I can help, Young Klondike. I never am."

It was an hour before the Unknown returned.

His report was most cheering.

The Indians had vanished from the mouth of the canyon.

He had seen nothing of them, either going down or coming back.

"Think it is safe to start?" asked Ned.

"Well, I still think there'll be an attack."

"But you don't think it will come from below?"

"No; my idea now is that the Indians and Studley's crowd went up the creek last night and joined the other band."

"And that we are in danger of an attack from that side?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps you are right, but I have my ideas, too."

"What?"

"That Little Big Fox has been working for us, and has turned them off."

"Don't you believe it."

"You'll see in the end that the boy was not a traitor."

"He was, and don't you forget it."

"No time to waste talking," cried Dick. "Question is, what are we going to do?"

"We are going to load down with all the gold we can carry and light out," declared Ned.

"Why don't you go now and leave the gold? We can dig up what we buried, and that will be all we want to carry," said the Unknown.

"Nothing of the sort," replied Ned stubbornly. "We've got the launch. We can load the buried gold into that and take it in tow."

"You're the boss, Young Klondike," said the Unknown. "Fire away, but it's against my judgment, all the same."

"We'll be quick," said Ned. "Come on, now. It won't take us half an hour to pack down a boatload of gold."

"Do you mean all hands of us?" asked the detective. "One at least ought to stay on guard."

"It ain't necessary. If we don't have your help it will take just so much longer."

"I'll stand guard," said Edith. "I can call you in case of an alarm. You go on."

It was so agreed.

Before starting away from their camp on El Dorado Creek the boys had provided themselves with a number of stout bags fit to carry gold in case they found any.

These they now took with them up to the prospect hole and soon had filled as many as they could carry.

It made almost no impression on the supply of nuggets.

"Don't it seem a shame to leave all these behind," said Ned.

"Don't be greedy, Young Klondike," replied the Unknown.

"Greedy or not, I'm going to dump these and return for another load if there has been no alarm."

Dick, who was getting nervous, protested against this also.

But Ned was determined.

When they got back to the pass, Edith reported everything quiet.

"We'll take the boat and canoe down to the shore and thus decide," said Ned.

All was quiet down at the shore too.

There really seemed no good reason why they should not venture back for another load.

So the bags were dumped, and leaving Edith on guard at the shore they returned to the prospect hole again.

"The pitcher that goes too often to the well gets broken at last," said the Unknown, in his oracular fashion.

"Stop your croaking!" cried Dick. "Let's get right down to it. It's the last time we come back here, I promise you that."

There was something strange about the Unknown.

It did seem as though he always hit it right in his predictions.

Before they could even get the bags open, a wild cry from the direction of the camp attracted the attention of all.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah! Too late! They're here and they've captured Edith!" the detective cried.

"And our rifles down at the tents!" gasped Ned. "How could we be such fools as to leave them behind?"

"These will help!" shouted Dick, seizing a pick-ax.

Ned got another and they started after the Unknown, who was already on the dead run for the tent.

But it was all too late.

Suddenly, a wild shout rang out in the pass, and to Young Klondike's horror, he saw flames coming out of the tents.

There were the Indians swarming in between the rocks.

There was Jake Studley and his gang of toughs, too.

Edith was running before them.

Studley and others were after her.

Of course it was plain to be seen that someone had sneaked in ahead of the others and applied the torch to the tents.

On they ran.

Dick fell a little behind, and it was well that he did so as will be seen.

He looked for the Unknown, but the detective had sneaked around behind the tents.

He shouted to Ned to be careful, but it was not our hero's style to hold back.

Any one looking down from the rocky heights a moment later would have been treated to a startling scene.

In front of the burning tents Big Fox and his band came rushing. The giant of the slews grappled with Young Klondike, while Jake Studley seized Edith.

Dick and the Unknown came rushing to the rescue with their picks upraised and ready for business.

It looked very much as if these new diggings might cost Young Klondike and his friends their lives.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER THE FIGHT.

"ZED! Oh, Zed! Are you there?"

It was Dick Luckey who gave the shout.

Dick stood on the bank of Owl Creek looking down into a deep gully on the other side of the rocks above the pass.

He was alone.

Up the creek several canoes could be seen moving toward the mountains.

The foremost was filled with Indians; in the next was Jake Studley's gang, and Young Klondike and Edith both prisoners could have been seen among them by the aid of a glass.

The third canoe contained Indians and so did the fourth.

The fifth was empty and was being towed along behind the others.

This was the canoe which had been the cause of all the trouble, for it carried Young Klondike's gold.

The fight was over.

Dick and the Unknown had come on the scene just too late to be of any assistance to Edith or Ned.

Big Fox captured Ned, and Jake Studley picked Edith up and carried her off through the pass as easily as though she had been a baby.

Several Indians pounced on the Unknown and ran him off through the pass, but Dick by a freak of fortune was left behind.

It was because he was behind.

As he passed the nearest of the burning tents, one of Studley's men fired at him.

At the same instant the tent collapsed and fell in front of him.

Dick went down first, though.

The ball struck him on the collar bone, glanced off and did little harm, but Dick stumbled and fell, striking his head with such force that it stunned him.

Probably Studley and his Indians thought him dead, for they went off and left him lying as he was.

When Dick Luckey—lucky by this fortunate accident as well as by name—came to himself he was alone.

Dick scrambled to his feet and ran out of the pass.

He could see the canoes moving off up Owl Creek far in the distance.

This was despairing, but before he had time to think about it Dick heard his own name called.

The cry came from the gully, and the voice was the Unknown's.

"ZED! Oh, Zed! Are you there?" shouted Dick, staggering over to the edge of the gully.

"Right down here, dear boy!" came the answer. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, I'd like to get out, too! Look, Dick! Look right down under your feet."

Now, it was a good forty feet to the bottom of the gully, where there were broken rocks in plenty—an ugly place.

If the Unknown had gone down to the bottom it is doubtful if Dick would have had the pleasure of hearing his voice then.

But there had been no such ill luck for the detective.

There he was clinging to a bush with his legs dangling over the precipice.

It was rather a trying situation even as it was.

"I see you!" cried Dick. "Hold on, Zed! Hold on! I'll get you out of that!"

"Ye gods and little fishes, ain't I holding on!" cried the detective. "Have I been doing anything but the hold on act ever since that infernal giant threw me down here? Little paleface with big hat no good. Me no want him; that's what he said, Dick, and then he just chuckled me over into this infernal hole, and here I've been holding on ever since."

"Oh, Zed, what shall we do?" groaned Dick.

"They've carried off Ned and Edith, and all the gold we had in the canoe——"

"Oh, hang the gold!" broke in the Unknown. "If it hadn't been for the infernal stuff we wouldn't have been in this snarl! Get the rope in the boat for Heaven's sake, or is that gone, too?"

Dick looked down toward the shore, and to his great joy caught sight of the boat.

Not caring to be troubled with it, Jake Studley had left it behind.

"That's all right! Be with you in a moment! Hold on!" he shouted, and then ran off to the boat, got the rope and was back again before the Unknown thought he had time to reach the bank of the creek.

"Here you are, Zed!" he shouted. "Can you work it yourself, or shall I try to get down and help you?"

"Oh, I can work it all right. Don't you fret," said the detective, coolly. "Just drop down the rope, Dick, and leave the rest to me."

Dick wound the end of the rope around the trunk of a stunted cedar which grew near the edge of the gully, and tossed the other end down to the Unknown.

The detective managed it all with wonderful coolness.

Letting go his bush with one hand and seizing the rope, he managed to make a noose at the end.

"You might have done this for me, Richard, if you hadn't been rattled," he said; "but no matter. I'm thankful to say that I'm quite able to do it for myself. Why, this is nothing to the time I fell off the top of Mont Blanc in Switzerland in '82. Then it took three men and five ropes to pull me up, and—here you go! See the crazy old Unknown bob up serenely. By the Jumping Jeremiah, he's hard to kill!"

He broke off short in his story as soon as he had the noose ready.

Throwing it over his head at the risk of its tightening round his neck, the detective managed to get first one arm through it, then the other, then letting it tighten as it would.

"Hooray! All right now!" he cried. "Hoist away there, Dicky, my boy! Where's the other end? Round a tree, eh? What's that you say? You don't think you can do it? If you can't I'll have to come up hand over hand, but I think you can."

As usual the Unknown was right, for Dick did do it. Exerting all his strength he pulled the rope around the tree, and the Unknown came swinging up out of the hole.

It took him just about half a minute to throw off the rope after he got his feet on solid ground.

"Hooray for our side!" he shouted. "Now, then, Dick, what's the matter with you? Blood on your shoulder, eh? A big bump on your forehead, eh? Shucks! The bump's nothing, but how about the wound?"

Dick could not tell him, for he did not know himself.

He was so weak and nervous that he was all in a tremble.

It was a lucky thing for him that he had a man like the detective to deal with.

If the Unknown had been one of the despairing kind, Dick might have given up altogether; but encouragement goes a great way, and there is no situation so bad that it cannot be made better if one only keeps cheerful and puts his shoulder to the wheel and tries.

The detective was just that sort.

He made Dick strip off his clothes and examined the boy's wound, talking all the time and telling how Big Fox had thrown him down into the gully.

"I'm ashamed of myself—thoroughly ashamed of myself," he kept saying. "To be knocked out by a dirty redskin. Why, Dick, that giant made no more of picking me up than if I had been a bag of meal. Consarn his picture! Just wait till I get my hands on him! Never mind about this wound, boy. It's only a scratch, and if you hadn't gone down the way you did there's no sort of doubt that the Indians would have scalped you. Lucky! Always lucky. That's your name and that's your nature, too."

And all this light talk brought Dick back to himself again.

"I'm going to be as cool as you are now, Zed," he said. "We've got to act. If Ned Golden dies I don't want to live, and Edith——"

Poor Dick's voice failed him here, and the detective had to interfere again.

"There, there! Don't you talk!" he exclaimed. "It's all right. Jake Studley is bossing this job and he ain't going to kill Young Klondike, you mark my words. No, sir! Ned is altogether too valuable a piece of property, and as for Edith, who'd ever think of killing the dear girl? Oh, no; they'll try to make Ned pay a big lot of money, or sign away his claims, or something of that kind, but they won't kill him, you can bet your sweet life on that. Come, Dick, my boy, you brace up and we'll see what can be done to make the best of this very bad job."

The first thing the Unknown did was to go back to the camp to search for the rifles, which might have spared them all this distress if they had not been carelessly thrown aside.

A scene of perfect desolation awaited them.

The tents had been entirely consumed.

Everything of any value was gone, and as was to be expected the rifles were gone, too. Dick could only feel too thankful that Jake Studley had left them the boat.

"All we can do is to follow on and trust to luck," declared the Unknown.

So they got into the boat and pulled away up Owl Creek.

And that is how it fared with Dick and the Unknown after the fight.

Meanwhile, what of Edith and Ned?

Just about that time Young Klondike and Edith were feeling devoutly thankful that they were alive.

They were in the boat with their hands tied behind them, moving up the creek toward the mountains, and not a word being said by their captors.

Jake Studley sat in the bow pulling away at an old clay pipe.

His toughs—there were four of them—kept a sharp eye on the prisoners.

Two paddles were working, the men taking turns, and so far no one had spoken a word.

This was hard for Ned, for he was one of the talking kind, but each time he had attempted to start a conversation Studley cut him short, roughly ordering him to hold his tongue, until at last they reached the foot of the mountains and the canoes shot into a deep canyon, from which Owl Creek came tumbling over the rocks.

Then the prospector knocked the ashes out of his pipe and began to talk himself.

"Now, then, Young Klondike, I've had my smoke out and I'm ready to do the jawing act," he said. "How do you like this sort of thing as far as you've got? Don't be backward about coming forward now. I'm ready to listen to all you've got to say."

"I think you can imagine all I've got to say," replied Ned quietly. "This is a very shabby way to treat a brother miner, Mr. Studley. I must say that."

"Not a bit shabbier than you treated me. I don't like to be shot at and robbed, and treated like a dog when I come to protest against it. You've been running things with a mighty high hand around these yere diggings of late, Young Klondike, and I hain't the only one it has occurred to that the time has come when you ought to be called down."

"Well, I'm pretty well down now, and I'd like to get up again," said Ned. "Perhaps you can tell me how it is to be done!"

"Oh, you want to know, do you? So you've come down to that."

"Yes; I want to know. Suppose you tell me."

"Waal, that's business. It brings me right where I want to get. Young Klondike, I want you to waive all right to your new diggin's, and to give me that same in writing. That's proposition No. 1."

"Proposition No. 1 noted," replied Ned, in his quiet way. "Now, let's have No. 2."

"No. 2 is even easier," said the prospector. "They tell me that the firm of Golden & Luckey is worth a million. Is it so?"

"So you say."

"But what do you say?"

"Oh, I ain't saying."

"We'll pass on that. Whatever you said I wouldn't believe, so there's no sense in pressing the question. Is your check good for a hundred thousand dollars? Come, what do you say to that?"

"Who'd cash a check for you for a hundred thousand dollars?"

"Oh! Come, I like that! I'm too tough a specimen to get a big check cashed, am I? Come, come,

sonny, don't you fret, I can use a big check all right. Just try me and see."

"You mean blackmail."

"I mean business. I'm out for the stuff. The fact is, I've been laying for you for a long time. What in thunder! Are a couple of little counter jumpers like you and your partner to come to the Klondike and make a million, when a hard working man like me can't strike it at all? No, sir! Not much! That's the sort of thing that just don't go."

"If you worked for your dust the same as we have, probably you'd have the same luck. It's a poor way to expect to get money, to kill my friends and carry me off a prisoner. Now, then, Mr. Jake Studley, you listen to me. I reject both propositions clear and clean. I'll sign no papers and I'll give you no check. Mark that down with a red mark."

"Is that final, Young Klondike?"

"It is."

"But what does the lady say?"

"The lady can speak for herself, but I'll tell you right here and now that whatever she says, goes."

Of course Edith was as cool as possible.

It wouldn't have been Edith if she had been any other way.

"If you want my say on it, Jake Studley," she replied, "I tell you that you'll wait till the day after never, before I advise Ned Golden to listen to any such terms as you propose."

"Done!" said Studley. "I don't sell my cabbages twice. Both propositions rejected. Consequently, both are off and won't be made again. Now, then, Young Klondike, my price has gone up. Nothing short of your big claim on El Dorado Creek will satisfy me."

"You're crazy," said Ned. "You've killed my partner and you've killed my friend, and you may kill me, perhaps, but you'll never get me to yield."

"That settles it!" growled Studley. "We know what to do with this sort of cattle. Paddle on, boys! We'll try the Injuns on them! If they don't yield then—why, burn 'em, let 'em roast, and that'll give us Young Klondike's new diggings, anyhow, for when he's dead, who knows of them besides ourselves?"

And the toughs paddled on up the creek.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TORTURE DANCE IN THE CAVE.

The Unknown and Dick Luckey went up the creek to its very source, but saw nothing of Ned and Edith.

Big Fox and Jake Studley were equally invisible.

They made the discovery that Owl Creek issued from a cave in the side of the mountain about a mile beyond the point where it emerged from the canyon, but here their discoveries ended, for it seemed scarcely likely that they could have gone into the cave.

To make sure on this point the Unknown pulled the boat on into the darkness as far as they could go.

Dick made a torch out of a tough pine knot and held it in front of them as they advanced.

But they could not go far.

Progress was checked by a huge mass of rock which seemed to have dropped down from the roof of the cave.

Round this the water came with a rush from both sides, but it did not seem possible to get the canoe around it on either side—at least Dick could see no way.

So they gave it up and returned to the mouth of the cave and there drew the canoe up on the shore, wondering what was to be done next.

Now here was a case where the Unknown's shrewdness seemed to have deserted him.

There was a way around the boulder.

When Ned first saw it by the light of a flaming torch, held in the hand of Jake Studley, he thought the same as Dick thought, that there was no possible way out of the dilemma, and that they had gone up Owl Creek as far as they could go.

Nothing of the sort!

Edith knew better, for she observed that Big Fox and his band had vanished, something which also occurred to Ned when he stopped to think.

The mystery was explained in a moment.

Swiftly as the water ran here the creek was very shallow.

Jake Studley jumped out and all hands followed, the water not coming up much above their knees.

"Get out of there, Young Klondike, and you, too, Miss What's-your-name," the prospector called out.

It was easier said than done.

Ned and Edith were so cramped on account of their strained position that they could scarcely move, much less get out of the canoe.

"Lift them out," ordered Studley.

They came out of the canoe then and without much ceremony either.

Then Studley's men picked up the canoe, and tossing it on their shoulders walked behind the rock.

In this way the canoe went through the narrow passage without difficulty, for it was considerably wider above than below.

Then all at once Young Klondike found himself in a vast cavern, if it can be so termed, for it was open at the top and the last rays of the descending sun struck down into it, bathing one side of the rocks in light.

Here Owl Creek was a lake, and in the midst of the lake was an island.

All entered the canoe again, and Studley's men paddled for the island.

Ned saw that the Indians had already landed there, and had built a big fire on the rocks.

"Is that the end of our journey?" he asked of Studley, as the canoe rapidly approached the shore.

"That's as far as you are going to-day," replied Studley. "What you may do to-morrow is more than I can say."

"Sufficient unto the day is the island therof," said Edith. "I shall be so glad to see the last of this canoe that I don't care where we land."

"Oh, you've found your tongue again, have you,

ma'am?" sneered Studley. "Blame me, if I didn't begin to think you'd been struck dumb."

"Not quite," said Edith. "I can talk when I want to, and while I am about it let me ask you what you mean to do with us here?"

Jake Studley broke out into a diabolical laugh.

"Oh, you'll find out soon enough," he said. "I tell you, though, all the same, Young Klondike is going to be made to sign every paper I give him to sign. If you ask me how we are going to make him, why, then, I say wait and see."

They landed on the island a few minutes after that.

The Indians received them after their usual surly fashion.

Not one moved away from the fire, and there were many more than had come up the creek in the canoes.

Indeed they scarcely looked toward the new-comers.

"No chance of escape from this place, Young Klondike," sneered Studley, "so I may as well set you free."

He drew out his knife and cut the cords with which Ned's and Edith's hands were tied.

"Now make yourselves to hum," he added, "and don't bother me till I'm ready to bother with you. Of course, if you should take it into your heads to muss with the boats you'll be instantly shot."

Whereupon Jake Studley walked over to the fire and began talking with Big Fox.

Edith and Ned sat down on a rock near the shore.

For some moments neither spoke.

Their hearts were filled with sorrow.

Both believed that Dick was dead, and as they had seen the Unknown thrown down into the gully they had no hope that he could have escaped with his life.

"Ned," whispered Edith, at last, "this is a dreadful state of affairs. Do you know that I can scarcely contain myself thinking of poor Dick, and of Zed, too! Oh, how we shall miss them, if we ever do escape with our lives!"

Ned sat silently looking off at the water.

Outwardly he seemed cool enough, but in reality he was so deeply moved that he could not trust himself to speak.

"How can you keep so cool?" continued Edith. "Of course, before that scoundrel, Studley, I wasn't going to show how bad I felt, but it does seem to me as if I should never get over this."

"Well, I know I never shall," said Ned, hollowly. "Never, never! Dick Luckey was my dearest friend, and as for the Unknown—"

Here Ned's voice choked. He could say no more, but Edith saw now that he felt the situation as keenly as she did herself.

"It's all my fault, too," Ned went on to say, after a moment. "I would persist in going back for the second load of that confounded gold; if I had only been satisfied with what we already had, Jake Studley would not have caught us unawares, and this thing would never have occurred."

"Don't say that," answered Edith, brokenly. "I'm sure it's as much my fault as yours, Ned. I was on guard, and instead of keeping the sharp watch I should have done, I had to get interested in a flock of ducks which had settled on the creek. Next thing I knew Studley and the Indians were all around me. I broke away from them and ran through the pass, but, oh, what did it all amount to? Nothing—worse than nothing! Oh, Dick! Dick, shall I never see you again?"

Edith's calmness was all gone now—she was sobbing like a child.

"There, there," said Ned, soothingly. "Don't take it so much to heart, Edith. It don't do any good and will only attract Studley's attention to us. Look over there around the fire. Ain't that Little Big Fox next to that Indian with the feathers in his hair?"

"It certainly looks like him, Ned."

"It is the boy. Ah, poor Zed was right. He's the traitor! Still, I don't understand why he went to all the trouble to show us the gold as he did."

"He's looking at us," whispered Edith.

"I see. Yes, it's Little Big Fox. Hush! He's coming this way!"

The Indian boy had left the crowd about the fire and was moving toward the rocks.

But he did not come up to where Ned and Edith were at first.

Instead of that he sat down on the shore and began whittling out an arrow from a piece of wood, never even looking their way.

"Why don't you go over and speak to him, Ned?" asked Edith.

"No, no! I believe he's got something to say to us and is watching his chance. For me to go to him wouldn't help matters; it would only draw Studley's attention to us. You just wait and see what the little fellow does next."

Ned's confidence in Little Big Fox was beginning to return.

After a few moments the boy got up and carelessly walked their way.

"We are going to hear something now," whispered Ned. "Just you wait and see, Edith; I believe Little Big Fox is true blue after all."

Whatever the little Indian boy may have intended to do he got no chance to do it, for when he had almost reached the place where Ned and Edith were sitting the whole situation suddenly changed.

All at once Big Fox gave a wild shout in which every Indian joined.

Jake Studley and his men, grasping their rifles drew back, shouting, too.

"No, no! I won't have it," cried the prospector. "These prisoners are mine! We've got to handle them the way we want. If you interfere we'll wipe you out, Big Fox—you and all your band."

The answer was a yell, and Big Fox and his Indians made a rush for Studley's crowd, who in turn beat a retreat toward their canoes, firing as they went.

Of course a scene of terrible confusion followed.

The instant the excitement began the little Indian boy, making a hurried gesture to Ned, ran off and joined his people.

"Don't move, Edith! That means stay where we are, sure," breathed Ned.

By this time the battle between the Indians and Jake Studley's toughs was in full progress.

Rifles cracked on both sides.

The Indians flung their tomahawks at the toughs, and two of them went down.

Then it was the turn of an Indian to fall wounded—then another and another.

Following this was a rush on Studley's crowd.

This settled it.

Jake himself made a break for the canoes.

The others followed.

Hastily launching the biggest canoe, they tumbled into it and pulled away from the island.

The Indians fired a round or two without effect and then gave it up and let them go.

Studley made directly for the cave, and a moment later they were out of sight under the overhanging rocks.

Ned flung his arm around Edith then, for with horrible yells the redskins made a rush for them.

"We can but die together, Edith," he whispered. "Be brave! There is still hope! I believe that Little Big Fox will save us yet."

But was there still hope?

Certainly it looked very doubtful.

In a moment the Indians were upon them, and Edith and Ned were separated.

But the worst came a little later.

The band around the fire produced a stout stake, which was driven into a crevice between the rocks.

To this stake Young Klondike and Edith were tied. Dry wood was heaped up around them.

With sinking heart Ned watched these preparations, realizing only too surely what that meant.

The torture dance of the Indians was about to begin.

They cared nothing for Jake Studley's plans.

The white prisoners were to be tortured with fire, and burned at the stake in the end.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RESCUE.

DICK and the Unknown were having a hard time of it outside the cave.

Perhaps it was easier for Ned and Edith to think of their friends dead, than for Dick and the detective to know that their friends were alive and at the mercy of the terrible Coppermine Indians, so noted for their cruelty, to say nothing of Jake Studley and his gang.

"Dick, I'm all at sea," said the Unknown. "It seems just impossible that Ned and Edith could have been landed anywhere, and yet how in the world did Studley and his Indians get them any further up the stream?"

"Don't you think there can be some way around that boulder?" replied Dick. "That would explain it all."

"Well, dear boy, it didn't seem so to me. I looked once. I can look again."

And they did try to find the entrance to the cave, but somehow they missed it.

The water ran so rapidly through the narrow opening between the boulder and the rocks that they found it hard to get the canoe up to it.

As they could see no chance of getting through, they again gave it up and returned to the bank, where for some time they remained in a state of uncertainty, disliking to leave the place, feeling sure that Ned and Edith had been taken that way, and, in short, not knowing what to do.

Such was the situation when all at once a shot was heard in among the rocks.

It was followed by many others.

Wild yells mingled with the sounds, and then there were other shots.

At last all sounds ceased and a death-like stillness pervaded the cave.

"Well!" cried Dick. "What in the world does all that mean, Zed?"

"It means that we are a pair of chumps!" exclaimed the Unknown, excitedly; "it means that there is a way behind those rocks, and that Ned and Edith went further on up the creek. Dick, I'm stumped. I've tried my best to find the hole and I can't—I'll be blest if I know what to do."

"Hark!" cried Dick.

"What do you hear?"

"The sound of a paddle—surely you must hear it yourself."

"I do now."

"The canoes are coming down again."

"Then we've got to look out for ourselves in order that we may keep in shape to look out for Young Klondike and Edith," said the Unknown, grimly. "Remember, we ain't armed. If we were it would be altogether different. Up she comes! We lay low till we know what all this means."

The Unknown was acting as he spoke.

He seized the boat and dragged it up out of the water.

Dick lent a hand and they deposited it behind a big boulder on the shore.

"Now, then, we lay for them," breathed the Unknown. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, that's Jake Studley's voice or I'm a ghost! Here they come and Young Klondike is not with them! Dear me! Dear me!"

Peering out from behind the rock, they saw Studley and his men suddenly appear in that seemingly impassable pass.

They were walking in the water, holding the canoe high above their heads.

It was easy to lift it over the boulder, where it would have been quite possible to take it through the pass.

Immediately it was past the boulder they dropped the canoe into the water again, and all sprang in and went shooting down Owl Creek.

"Well, thank goodness, it's the last of Young Klondike, anyhow," they heard Studley say, as the canoe flew past. "Big Fox's band will do the torture dance around them, and burn them to the stake in the end."

In a moment the canoe had been swept away down the stream.

"Zed, did you hear?" breathed Dick.

"Yes, I heard," replied the Unknown, grimly. "Our boat goes up the creek now, Dick Luckey, if we have to drag it over the boulder, and God grant we may not be too late."

But could Dick and the Unknown be of any assistance to Ned and Edith, even if they succeeded in getting the boat into the cave?

It certainly would have appeared more than doubtful if they could have seen Young Klondike and the brave girl who shared his peril, as they were just then.

Tied to the torture stake, back to back, facing the terrible Coppermine Indians who danced madly about them, flashing burning brands in their faces as they went whirling around the stake, the rocky walls of the vast cavern echoing back their wild shouts, the situation seemed serious enough, and yet Ned and Edith never flinched.

Death in its most horrible form stared them in the face, and yet there they stood calm and silent waiting for the inevitable, hope abandoned, everything looking as black as black can be.

And even the elements seemed to share their feelings, for now suddenly the sky grew dark.

Night was close upon them, but a storm was coming too.

Now, in Alaska when it rains it rains, and the storms come up suddenly and are of the greatest violence.

A storm was coming now. Big Fox saw it, and with one quick look upward he seized a burning brand from the fire and started to apply it to the dry wood heaped up around Edith and Ned.

All at once there came a flash of lightning of terrible intensity.

It seemed to dart right down into the cavern and play about the head of the giant of the slews, being instantly followed by a deafening thunderclap which appeared to shake the very mountain itself.

The burning brand fell from the Indian's grasp, and Big Fox dropped like a stone, while from all the Indians cries of terror went up.

As they crowded about Big Fox the rain came all at once.

It was a deluge!

In an instant the fire was extinguished, and pitch darkness came upon the cavern, through which the wild cries of the Indians sounded in a weird way.

It was at this trying moment that Ned saw the little Indian boy suddenly appear at his side.

"Me save Young Klondike boss!" he whispered.
"Me save Missy Edith!"

With his knife he cut them free, and whispering to Ned to follow shot off into the darkness, running toward the shore.

How Ned managed to get down to the shore he hardly knew, but there he was and there was Edith with him, and there was Little Big Fox, too.

"Quick, Young Klondike boss! Take boat and go!" breathed Little Big Fox, pointing to the canoe.

Ned lifted Edith in and then sprang in himself.

"And you, Little Big Fox?" he asked.

"Oh, me go too," said the Indian boy.

He stepped into the canoe and seized the paddle.

At the same instant a horrible yell rang out through the darkness of the cavern, and the Indians came running down toward the shore.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN HOT PURSUIT.

"On, Little Big Fox! On! Don't let them overtake us, or we are lost!"

It was no use for Ned to try to do anything.

If Little Big Fox could not paddle the canoe to safety then surely he could not.

But there were other canoes coming and these were filled with Coppermine Indians. The case looked very serious indeed.

"Keep cool, Ned," said Edith. "Something tells me we are going to come out of this all right."

"Yes, yes! All right! All right!" cried the Indian boy. Me no bad boy. Me see my people dat time, Missy Edith. Me no leave you, den dey come catch you. Me go to dem. Me turn dem away. All right only Jake Studley he come, too. Den me stay and watch-watch—all time watch. Now me stay with Young Klondike boss always—yes, always. Me neber go way again."

There was something pathetic in the way Little Big Fox put it.

Ned no longer doubted that the boy had been true to him.

But would this save them now?

It looked doubtful.

Already the Indians had caught sight of them; it began to grow a little lighter in the cave.

They crowded into their canoes and with wild shouts made for the fugitives.

Several shots were fired, but owing to the darkness none of these did any harm.

In hurried words Little Big Fox explained that they must leave the canoe at the narrow pass, lifting it out of the water and carrying it over the boulder.

"We can do it if dey no cut us off," he said. "Oh, yes, we can do it, Young Klondike boss!"

"But that's just what they are going to do—cut us off!" groaned Edith, as two canoes shot off from the rest, one on either side of them.

It was perfectly evident that the Indians meant to head them off at the pass.

All at once a loud shout was heard.

It came from the direction of the pass.

"Ned! Ned! Be quick! We'll help you through with your boat!"

"Dick's voice!" gasped Ned. "Oh, Edith!"

"There on the boulder!" cried Edith, "and there's dear old Zed, too!"

It was another flash of lightning which showed them their friends.

There were Dick and the Unknown perched on the boulder.

They had been unable to get the heavy boat through the pass, and hearing the shots climbed up on the boulder to find out what was going on behind it.

"Come on! Come on!" roared the Unknown. "Ye gods and little fishes, we can down them yet!"

Just then an Indian aimed a rifle at Ned.

The Unknown must have seen the action, dark as it was, for he flung a heavy stone, picked up on the boulder, at the canoe.

It struck the Indian and knocked the rifle out of his hand, just as he was in the act of firing.

The Indian, with a roar of pain, fell back on his friends, who fell over against the side of the canoe.

This did the business.

The canoe was overturned in a twinkling, and the Indians went floundering into the lake.

At the same instant Young Klondike's canoe reached the shallows.

All sprang out and undertook the difficult task of lifting the canoe over the boulder.

Dick and the Unknown were there to help them.

There was no chance to say a word.

It was a time for action, not for talk.

Edith slid through the pass and the boys and the detective managed to get the canoe over the boulder.

But the Indians were pressing close behind them.

Several shots were fired.

Once past the boulder there would be little doubt about the Indians overtaking them.

Still the situation was serious and once more Little Big Fox came to their aid.

"Big stone heap shaky!" he cried. "All push him, he go over. Indians no get out den."

"Hello! You on deck again!" cried the Unknown. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, there is something in what this boy says. Young Klondike, this stone is on the move."

"Try it and try it quick!" gasped Ned. "Oh, Dick, if we can only put this stone between us and the Indians we may get a chance to breathe."

"Work, boys! Work! I'll hold the boats!" cried Edith, and then all threw their weight against the stone.

It moved slightly.

"Once more!" cried Ned. "Now, then! Altogether!"

Suddenly the stone slipped forward and tumbled against the ledge.

The entrance to the cavern was closed.

A journey of many miles would be necessary before Big Fox's band could get out of the cavern.

Nor could they climb upon the boulder as Dick and the Unknown had done, for it was as smooth as glass on the other side.

It was all right now.

For the time being they were perfectly safe.

"Bully for you, Little Big Fox! You're a brick!" cried the Unknown. "Oh, Ned, Ned! Ain't I glad to see you again!"

It was a moment of rejoicing.

What Ned said to Dick and Dick to Ned, and the Unknown to Edith, and all the rest of it, there is no time to tell.

They got into the boat and the canoe, and lost not a moment in putting distance between them and the pass.

The wild shouts of the Indians on the other side did not disturb them, for Little Big Fox assured them it would be simply impossible to get through now.

Through the big canyon Owl Creek runs swiftly, and as they had their paddles and oars to help them along the best of time was made.

Soon they were in the open country again flying on and rapidly leaving the mountains behind them.

At last they felt safe and could discuss the situation without expecting every instant to hear a rifle crack.

"Well," declared Ned, "upon my word this is the happiest moment of my life. Dick, if you had turned out dead that would have been the last of the Klondike for me. I should have immediately quit the country and never returned, and as for Edith, her heart was broken when she thought you were gone."

"Not quite broken," laughed Edith. "I've got enough of it left to be a bit worried still. Zed, what about Jake Studley and his men? Do you think they could have stopped anywhere? Don't you think we ought to be on the lookout for them?"

"Why there ain't any doubt about it," replied the Unknown, "and I am on the lookout, and don't you forget it."

"I don't fear them a bit," said Ned. "We haven't made our escape from the Indians for nothing. It isn't written in the book of fate that Jake Studley's gang shall down us now."

"There are their canoes!" cried Dick. "They've gone ashore!"

Suddenly rounding a turn in the creek they caught sight of a fire built between two big rocks a little way back from the shore.

Moving around the fire were several dark figures.

Jake Studley was easily recognizable among the others.

The prospector seemed to be toasting a piece of meat at the end of a fork.

Down at the shore the two canoes were secured.

It was evident that the toughs had gone into camp for the night.

"Come, this is a bad job," said the Unknown. "We'll never be able to get by them without being seen, never in the world."

"Yes, yes," broke in Little Big Fox. "Me do Indian trick, me show boss with the big hat."

"Do it then, you little snoozer," snapped the Unknown, "and if your Injun trick fails I'll jam my big hat over your eyes."

Little Big Fox paddled up to the shore where many small cedar trees grew.

Here they landed and the Indian boy cut several dozen boughs from the trees.

"Young Klondike boss lie down in canoe, everybody lie down and Little Big Fox put trees over dem. Den we go by camp and Studley boss no see."

But "Studley boss" did see.

They had almost passed in safety, when he suddenly caught sight of the boats.

He thought they were filled with Indians, for the trick was an old one which Jake Studley knew perfectly well.

With a loud shout he announced his discovery.

It was no use to fire, and Studley did not attempt it.

He and his men jumped into their own canoes, and in a moment were off in hot pursuit.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW YOUNG KLONDIKE ENDED THE CHASE.

"STOP! Hold on there or we'll clean you out, lock, stock and barrel! Surrender and we'll spare your lives!"

Thus Jake Studley shouted as he guided his canoe down Owl Creek.

It is doubtful if even then he certainly knew that he had Young Klondike to deal with, for Ned's party had a good start.

But they were rapidly losing it.

It was awkward working the boat down the creek among the stones, and Ned would not allow Little Big Fox to drive the canoe ahead, as he might easily have done.

The moments passed, each one bringing Studley's canoes closer.

It was lighter now. The storm had passed away, and the moon rising made it almost as bright as day.

"They are gaining on us," said the Unknown. "They are steadily gaining on us. I really don't see what we are to do."

"Unless we land and try to hide," said Dick.

"I'm afraid it wouldn't succeed," replied Ned. "Jake Studley knows the country and we don't; trouble would be sure to come."

"Oh, if we only had our rifles!" sighed the Unknown, "how quick Edith could do her old act and shoot the canoe full of holes. Ye gods and little fishes, that would blame soon put an end to the chase!"

A shout from Jake Studley interrupted the conversation just then.

"I see you now, Young Klondike!" he roared. "You'd better stop. You'll regret it if you don't! This chase will never end till we've captured you, and when we capture you we shall surely kill you, but we'll let you live if you stop now!"

"He knows us all right," said the Unknown. "Something has got to be done to end this chase."

"I can end it right now," said Ned, who had been talking in whispers to Little Big Fox.

"What do you mean?" demanded Edith.

"Yes, Young Klondike, what do you mean?" asked the Unknown.

"Exactly what I say," answered Ned. "If the rest of you will obey me in every particular I can end this chase off hand."

"Then I wish to Heaven you would," said the Unknown, "for I'm sick of all this business. Oh, I'll obey you all right, dear boy."

"See those three bowlders there in the middle of the creek?" demanded Ned, pointing ahead.

"Of course."

"Pull in around behind them and stop; leave the rest to me."

"Stop! That would be to commit suicide. I believe they mean to shoot down every mother's son of us, and that would give them just the chance they want."

"Kicking at the very start?" cried Ned, who had thrown off his coat and was untying his shoes. "I told you to leave the rest to me."

"We agree!" cried Dick. "Don't interfere with him, Zed."

"Not I!" said the detective; "far be it from me to interfere with the honorable Young Klondike; I think I mistrust what the boy means to do."

Whether his suspicions were correct or not the Unknown did not state, when Ned dove into the creek the instant boat and canoe were behind the bowlders.

Ned was in light swimming order, and carried his knife between his teeth.

Little Big Fox instantly dropped over the side of the boat after him.

The Indian boy also had his knife between his teeth. Here the creek was decidedly deep.

In an instant the boys disappeared beneath the water, and swam around in front of the bowlders.

Here they came up, but only just far enough to breathe.

Now, there was no better swimmer in Alaska than Ned Golden.

He could dive and float and swim under water with an ease which was scarcely paralleled, and Little Big Fox was quite as skillful as himself.

Neither spoke a word now, but just tread water and remained watching for Jake Studley's canoes to come down.

It was cold, bitterly cold, but Ned did not fear cramp, for he had accustomed himself to this sort of thing by regular bathing in the El Dorado Creek.

As the canoes drew near, Young Klondike gave the Indian boy the signal, and both dropped under the water out of sight.

"We're bound to overhaul them sooner or later," Ned heard Jake Studley say, as he went down. "I think I'll keep the girl and marry her, and keep

Young Klondike till I make him sign those papers; the rest of them can be killed off hand."

"A very pretty programme!" thought Ned. "Well, we'll see if I can't put a stop to this chase!"

He turned over on his back and held the knife ready. Little Big Fox did the same.

Now, birch bark makes a very good canoe, but birch bark won't stand against a sharp knife.

As Jake Studley's canoe came up, Ned drove his knife into the bottom in three places, twisting it each time, Little Big Fox doing the same for the other canoe.

"Gee whiz! We've struck a rock!" he heard Studley roar, and there was other shouting from his men.

But Ned did not wait to see the result.

With bold strokes under water he swam back between the bowlders.

"I've done it!" he gasped, coming to the surface. "Where's Little Big Fox? Take us into the boat, quick!"

Up came the Indian boy and Dick helped him in.

"Great snakes! We're sinking! Get out on the rocks, boys, or we'll all be drowned!" they heard Jake Studley roar.

And for once in his life Jake Studley told the truth. Both canoes went to the bottom.

The last Young Klondike saw of the toughs they were standing on top of the big bowlder shaking their fists at the retreating boats, for before they realized the situation Ned and Dick had paddled out of range.

"Ah, there! Stay there!" cried the Unknown. "We'll call around for you some time next year, neighbors. So long, Jakey! By-by!"

* * * * *

Young Klondike had ended the chase and after this adventure all was plain sailing.

Without stopping at the new diggings, Ned and his party went leisurely down Owl Creek to the beginning of the slews.

Here they found the launch undisturbed, and started in to dig up the buried gold.

Not an ounce of it had been disturbed, and they soon had it loaded back into the launch again and started down the slews.

With Little Big Fox to guide them they were able to make Bonanza Creek in a few hours, and next morning found them safe home at the camp on El Dorado Creek.

Everything had been progressing finely during their absence.

Mr. Bowers, the foreman, reported a steady yield of gold with several big finds.

Within a week Young Klondike organized a party to go up Owl Creek and work his new diggings.

But first he paid a visit to Dawson City and located the new claim.

This he was able to do without the slightest difficulty.

Jake Studley's story proved entirely false. The land had never been located before.

With fifty men to back them, Golden & Luckey had no difficulty at the new diggings.

A good deal of the gold was missing when they got there.

Doubtless Studley's gang carried it off, but it made little difference, for Young Klondike's new diggings proved to be marvelously rich.

Before the first snow flew Golden & Luckey had taken out nearly half a million from this wonderful new claim.

More than ever now did Young Klondike's name become famous.

Crowds flocked up the slews to the headwaters of Owl Creek.

The Indians retreated before them and Studley's gang never showed themselves.

Golden & Luckey sold off many outlying claims and made money rapidly.

It began to be rumored that theirs was the richest partnership in the whole Klondike region and we are bound to say that this was the truth.

But before winter set in, Ned, Dick and Edith along with the Unknown met with another series of startling adventures, which for lively interest can't be beaten.

To find out what they were read the next story of this series entitled, "YOUNG KLONDIKE'S CHASE; OR, THE GOLD PIRATES OF THE YUKON."

[THE END.]

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